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"Typology and the "Sin of Storytelling" in the  
Autobiographical and Biographical Writings of  
Emily, Philip, and Edmund Gosse"

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Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.  
Faculty of Arts  
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## Abstract

This thesis argues that Edmund Gosse's (1849-1928) autobiography Father and Son (1907) unfairly characterizes his parents' Biblical hermeneutics as unimaginative. Philip and Emily Gosse were members of the Plymouth Brethren, a Puritan sect whose interest in prophecy encouraged typological and tropological methods of reading the scriptures. Typology is a hermeneutic system which compares types in the Hebrew Scriptures with antitypes in the New Testament. For example, Isaac is a type of obedient sacrifice which foreshadows Christ, the antitype. Furthermore, typology often inspired a believer to apply types and antitypes tropologically, so that Isaac or Christ became a type of the individual Christian. Tropology is what allowed the Gosse family to read I Samuel 1-2 as if it were their own story. Following tropological principles, Emily Gosse dedicated Edmund to the Lord at birth in imitation of Hannah, and it was expected that he would become another infant Samuel, servant of the Lord.

The Samuel type became a burden to Edmund Gosse, but for his parents, typological and tropological readings served to inspire powerful and imaginative literature. This thesis will demonstrate that Philip and Emily's methods of reading the Bible were more "allegorical" and "literary" than Edmund acknowledged. Emily's 1835 "Recollections" and Abraham and His Children (1855) both draw upon the Puritan typological tradition to (unconsciously) commit the "sin of storytelling," a sin to which Emily confesses in the "Recollections". After Emily died in 1857, Philip Gosse wrote A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse (1857), which was followed by Anna Shipton's Tell Jesus! (1863). Philip and his wife's friend imposed the types of Christ and Job on the story of Emily's "Passion" in the same way that Emily imposed the Samuel type on her son.

Philip and Anna's biographies illustrate the "dark" side of typology's allegorical dimension; allegory is open to being abused by the reader who takes interpretive "liberties". In this sense, Philip and Anna violate the one whom they intend to honor by forcing their sufferer to conform to a Biblical pattern. Edmund Gosse is guilty of similar "sins" (although Philip and Anna saw typological biography as anything but sinful). Despite the fact that Edmund defined the typological tradition as inimical to artistic creation, he nevertheless exploited the "coercive" possibilities inherent in typological thinking when he composed The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (1890) and the series of literary biographies that he published in the years between 1890 and 1907. He reserved a typologist's right to define and "fashion" his biographical subjects on his own terms, taking the same liberties with the story of other men's lives that certain New Testament writers took with the stories of Abraham and his children.

Edmund's 1907 autobiography turns the tables on his parents' typological system by using the reading techniques they taught him in order to discredit the typological stories which "bound" him. He re-writes his autobiography and the Biblical stories which defined it in order to



prevent his biography from being "written" by Philip, Emily, and I Samuel 1-2. Edmund asserts the right to "fashion his inner life for himself" (F&S 251), but the irony is that Philip and Emily's typological "fashionings" serve as the literary model for their son's self-fashioning. Gosse's "double standard" is that he styles his own use of typology as artistic, but calls his parents' typological practices unimaginative. Ironically, it is precisely because Philip and Emily stayed within the Biblical tradition of "legitimate" storytelling that they emerge as more convincing storytellers of their own lives and the life of their son. Edmund is the prodigal son who rejected the Puritan literary tradition, yet his Puritan mother and father's typology was at least as imaginative as his Pre-Raphaelite poetry, and it is only insofar as Edmund returns to the Biblical and autobiographical tradition of his parents that he succeeds in writing his one enduring creative work, Father and Son.

This thesis is dedicated to  
Ron, Carlyle, and Joe Raine  
and Dr. Ken Muse

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Although space prevents me from mentioning them all, a great number of people have put up with me and my Gosse stories over the past three years. My supervisor, Dr. David Jasper, has suffered the most from an overdose of Gosse and I would like to thank him for his patience and sense of humor, as well as his unfailing assistance in his role as supervisor. Dr. Andrew Roach has also helped me in more ways than I can say--reading manuscript chapters on holidays to Poland, finding accommodation in Cambridge, being a one-person audience for the first reading of my first public paper, and laughing with me over Edmund's antics in Father and Son. Thank you, Andrew!

Thanks are due to Susan Cumings, an ideal listener and critic, and Steve, Robin, and Caroline Fountain, whom I recommend for the funniest study breaks in the world! Profound thanks go to Stewart Russell for his proof-reading, cups of coffee, encouraging words, and assistance in lay-out and printing--all of which went way beyond the call of duty. Furthermore, I would like to thank Robin and Heather Russell for giving me a place to stay during the last weeks of completion. And thank you Mom, Dad, and Joe, for the encouragement that came all the way from Missouri.

## List of Abbreviations

The documentation style which I have followed is that of the Modern Language Association of America, which is outlined in Joseph Gibaldi and Walter Achtert's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (1988). All authors cited receive parenthetical documentation within the text according to author's name and relevant page number or numbers (and more detailed documentation in the "Works Consulted" section), but I have abbreviated the titles of books cited from the Gosse family's corpus of writings in order to prevent confusion over which Gosse I am citing. The abbreviations for specific works are as follows:

<u>A&amp;C</u>	<u>Abraham and His Children</u> (Emily Gosse)
<u>CL</u>	<u>Cecil Lawson: A Memoir</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>CP</u>	<u>Coventry Patmore</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>CB</u>	<u>"The Custom of Biography"</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>F&amp;S</u>	<u>Father and Son</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>JT</u>	<u>Jeremy Taylor</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>Donne</u>	<u>The Life and Letters of John Donne</u> <u>Dean of St. Paul's</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>The Life of PHG</u>	<u>The Life of Philip Henry Gosse,</u> <u>F.R.S.</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>LWC</u>	<u>Life of William Congreve</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>A Memorial</u>	<u>A Memorial of the Last Days on</u> <u>Earth of Emily Gosse</u> (Philip Gosse)
<u>RBP</u>	<u>Robert Browning: Personalia</u> (Edmund Gosse)
<u>TB</u>	<u>Sir Thomas Browne</u> (Edmund Gosse)

### Other Abbreviations

<u>AMR</u>	<u>The Autobiography of Mark</u> <u>Rutherford</u> (William Hale White)
<u>CUL</u>	Cambridge University Library
<u>MRD</u>	<u>Mark Rutherford's Deliverance</u> (William Hale White)
<u>WAF</u>	<u>The Way of All Flesh</u> (Samuel Butler)

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## Preface

This thesis is the product of original research and represents the first in-depth study of the literary and typological relationship between Edmund Gosse and his parents. Recent critical scholarship has produced one book which focusses entirely upon Edmund Gosse himself, Ann Thwaite's Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape (1985), a highly informative but poorly referenced biography which leaves the researcher with the task of having to track down most of Thwaite's sources. Two critics in particular, Linda Peterson and Heather Henderson, have influenced the development of this thesis. Peterson's Victorian Autobiography (1986) and Henderson's The Victorian Self (1989) focus upon the hermeneutical and literary uses of typology in relation to Edmund Gosse's autobiography, although they only devote a chapter each to Father and Son. Other critics of the genre of Victorian autobiography mention Gosse in passing, as Howard Helsinger does in "Credence and Credibility" in Approaches to Victorian Autobiography (1979), and there are critics who offer individual readings of Father and Son in books about a selection of writers, such as Carl Dawson's Seven British Autobiographers, 1880-1914 (1988) and Douglas Brooks-Davies' Fielding, Dickens, Gosse, Iris Murdoch and Oedipal Hamlet (1989).

Many of the sources for this thesis come from largely unpublished material in Cambridge University Library and the Brotherton Collection in Leeds University Library, sources

which include the autobiographical and biographical writings of Philip and Emily Gosse. I have also relied on contemporary sources, such as reviews of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (1890) and Father and Son (1907).

As for the theoretical basis for the study of autobiography and biography proper, I am aware of the current corpus of writings on autobiography, but I have not found them to be germane to my thesis. For instance, John Sturrock's The Language of Autobiography (1993) does not mention Gosse, and the majority of books about autobiography in general are not interested in exploring the issue of typology. In addition to Peterson's and Henderson's books on Victorian autobiography, the works I have found most helpful are Literary Uses of Typology (1977), edited by Earl Miner, and George Landow's Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows (1980), which discuss the narrative, theological, and social possibilities of typology. Apart from these critical authors, I have mainly concentrated on nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century works on biography, such as Edmund Gosse's 1901 essay "The Custom of Biography" in the Anglo-Saxon Review, as well as his numerous biographies of poets. Partially because the thesis relies so heavily on unpublished sources and rare books, the analysis of this material takes precedence over a more general theoretical discussion of the genres of autobiography and biography, although a study of the Gosse family and their writings raises larger questions about the tradition of Puritan literature and its place in nineteenth-century literary history.



## Introduction

Edmund Gosse (1849-1928) was a Victorian critic and man of letters who wrote over sixty books, ranging from poetry to biography and criticism. A lion of the Victorian literary establishment--boasting friendships with Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James, and Thomas Hardy--he was early credited with introducing Ibsen to the English-speaking world. Yet his high prestige as an authority on literary matters was eclipsed soon after his death in 1928.

Generally-speaking, posterity has deemed Gosse's historical methods inaccurate, his poetry imitative and his criticism superficial. However, the one book which is still read and praised today is Gosse's autobiography, Father and Son (1907), which records his experience of growing up in a Plymouth Brethren household under the watchful care of parents who were "the latest consistent exemplars" of a seventeenth-century brand of Puritanism (F&S 43). Edmund struggled to become a poet in spite of the fact that his mother dedicated him to the Lord and expected him to become another infant Samuel.

Yet Edmund's literary ambition was not without family precedent, as his parents were distinguished authors in their own right. Philip Gosse published a large number of popular books about natural history, and his wife's publications included religious poetry, tracts, and a book on religious education called Abraham and His Children (1855). The parents' early writings and Father and Son constitute the central texts of the present study, in

addition to the biographies by Edmund Gosse which precede Father and Son. For the sake of specificity of argument, I have neglected Gosse's poetry and criticism in order to more carefully focus on autobiography and biography proper.

In this thesis I propose to examine Father and Son's criticism of Philip and Emily Gosse's "Puritan" methods of reading the Bible against the background of their autobiographical and biographical writings, arguing that Edmund inherited a typological tradition from them that became an unexpected source of creativity. It was unexpected from Edmund's point of view, and he refused to acknowledge that a strictly Biblical education could provide sufficient "literary" training for a poet or critic.

Edmund was taught to compare the Hebrew Scriptures with the New Testament, finding types in the earlier scriptures which prefigured and foreshadowed Christ. Typology, for the Gosse family, was further open to tropological or moral application. Edmund learned to read the Bible "as if it were part of a personal message or of thrilling family history" (F&S 224) and he was forced to internalize and impersonate the figure of Samuel, servant of the Lord. His dedication to the Lord at birth was in direct imitation of Hannah's dedication of Samuel to Eli in I Samuel 1-2.

In Father and Son, Edmund "turns" against the typological and tropological system that tried to define him. He condemns it as fundamentally narrow, oppressive, and unimaginative--highly inimical to the pursuit of literature and fiction. Edmund perceived that his parents read the Bible "literally" and tried to impose its stories on him.

But Edmund preferred to see himself as a poet instead of a Biblical character. He tried to turn the tables on typology by taking poetic licence with the typological stories which tried to "write" him; in effect, Edmund tries to re-write the scriptures in order to prevent them from defining the story of his life. Yet to do this he must rely upon the very methods of reading which he defined as unimaginative. Edmund adopts typology's tendency to take interpretive liberties with texts, and thus he subjects the Bible to the same shaping authority that typology wielded upon the Hebrew Scriptures.

This thesis will demonstrate that the Biblical training Edmund received was more adaptable to literary possibilities than he was prepared to acknowledge. Not only was it the source of powerful autobiographical and biographical writing on the part of his parents, but it also provided Edmund with the opportunity to impose his own versions of typological stories on his parents--for example, the father is both Abraham and Apollo in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse--in revenge for their imposition of the Samuel narrative on him. Yet the sad irony of Edmund's typological reversals and poetic fantasy of himself as "author" of the lives of his parents is that these same parents nevertheless emerge as stronger writers of both themselves and their son. Despite Edmund's attempts to classify Philip and Emily as Puritan Philistines, their typological artistry and story-telling "sins" were more profound and convincing than his "worldly" poetry and criticism.

Thus, in a certain sense, the attempt to write outside of the Puritan tradition did not assure Edmund of originality or coherence of thought, but instead turned him into a species of unrepentant prodigal, and yet one whose literary sins had difficulty competing with the Biblical storytelling of his Father. It is only when he returns to the hermeneutical tradition of his parents that Edmund achieves his greatest artistic creation. Ironically, Father and Son itself is testimony to the literary potential inherent in Biblical training, and Edmund's deconversion narrative remains more within the tradition of typologically inspired autobiography than he is willing to admit.

#### I. General Summary of Chapters.

The first three chapters of the thesis are devoted to the autobiographical and biographical "artistry" of Emily and Philip Gosse. Emily's "Recollections of the earlier life of Emily Bowes to the year 1835" and Abraham and His Children (1855) are the subjects of chapters one and two respectively. Chapter three examines Philip's 1857 A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse and Anna Shipton's memoir of Emily, Tell Jesus! (1863). These texts provide an alternative perspective to Edmund's evaluation of the literal and unimaginative qualities of his parents and the Puritan and Biblical tradition that they embody.

The second half of the thesis turns to Edmund's biographies and his 1907 autobiography, concluding with an examination of the Epilogue to Father and Son. Chapter four

takes Edmund's The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (1890) as its central text, chapter five focusses on the biographies of literary figures that Edmund wrote in the years between the publication of The Life and Father and Son, and the final chapter turns to Father and Son itself. Edmund's biographical activities mirror those of his father and Anna Shipton, in that he adopts a typological practitioner's right to exercise absolute "artistic" authority over the subjects under interpretation.

Edmund's arrogation of artistic authority in relation to the subjects of his biographies tended to facilitate a somewhat cavalier attitude towards factual accuracy, although his distortions were not always intentional. One of the main aims of this thesis is to explore the tension between fact and fiction in Edmund Gosse's biographical and autobiographical writing, a tension which has traditionally made the generic definition of autobiography problematic. In Gosse's case in particular, the difficulty is to distinguish between lies in the moral sense of the word and the kind of artistic lying which Oscar Wilde ironically advocates in his 1889 essay "The Decay of Lying". Edmund seems to aspire to artistic lying--whereby the author regards factual truth as a prosaic imposition upon his creative vision--but Edmund's fictions are often the result of inaccuracy and his propensity to apply, perhaps inappropriately, the authority of a typologist to the interpretive task of the biographer and autobiographer.

## II. Individual Chapter Summaries.

Chapter one begins with an extended definition of typology and a defence of its allegorical elements, before it turns to an examination of the Plymouth Brethren's methods of reading the Bible and Emily's biographical and religious history. The analysis of typology in general and the typological practices of the Plymouth Brethren, the sect which Philip and Emily joined in the early 1840's, places the latter's 1835 "Recollections" within the context of the Evangelical revival of the early nineteenth-century and the accompanying influence of typological hermeneutics. The unpublished "Recollections of the earlier life of Emily Bowes" is a brief spiritual autobiography which exemplifies the tropological method of reading. In the "Recollections", Emily interprets Deuteronomy 8 tropologically, reading the story of the Israelites in the wilderness as if it were her own story. By weaving her autobiography into the very fabric of the Bible, she imitates the Bunyan tradition of spiritual autobiography.

The "Recollections" follow a structural pattern of self-examination that was recommended by a contemporary preacher. As she turns inward, reflecting upon her sins, she confesses to the sin of story-telling. This iniquity eventually became the "definitive" sin for the Gosse family, a crime which in turn became necessary for Edmund to commit in order to escape the tropological circle--from self to Bible back to self--which the "Recollections" exemplify. His sin, in contrast to Emily's "legitimate" typological storytelling,

was to re-write the typological stories which "bound" him in order to escape their powerful self-defining demands.

If the "Recollections" confess the sin of storytelling, Abraham and His Children, a handbook for Christian parents, commits the "sin" of typology (although it was not sinful to Emily because she did not question its authority). The negative side to typology's allegorical dimension is its potential to be coercive, even abusive, when it claims the authority and freedom to define the subjects under interpretation--be they texts or people--on its own terms. Emily conceived the Christian mother's role to be that of an architect who must mould and shape her child into a proper Biblical pattern, and this "violent" shaping illustrates the dark side of typology. Emily's personal brand of Christian motherhood served to entrap Edmund within the text of I Samuel. She felt it was necessary to secure her son for the Lord's service in order to deliver him from the wrath to come. But Edmund came to experience the Samuel type as a form of hell on earth, for he was expected to consecrate his parents' dedication vows by becoming a preacher, a prospect which filled him with "horror" (F&S 167).

Emily's "Recollections" and Abraham and His Children (1855) represent the family scriptures which Edmund was encouraged to internalize and imitate. Abraham and His Children in particular constitutes Emily's attempt to write the story of Edmund's life for him, setting up typological expectations that he came to resent and fight against. In response to Abraham and His Children, Edmund's 1907 autobiography is an attempt to re-write the plot of his

mother's stories, taking them as a scriptural precedent from which to stray while at the same time depending upon Emily's "exploitation" of typology to show him how to take liberties with the Samuel story itself.

Chapter three turns to the memoirs which Philip Gosse and Anna Shipton composed after Emily Gosse's death in 1857. Philip's A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse (1857) and Shipton's Tell Jesus! (1863) share with Abraham and His Children a tendency to write "scripture", in the sense that they imbed Biblical quotations into the heart of their narratives and often pattern their phraseology after Biblical language. Emily's husband and her friend Anna write what could be called "Gossepels", forcing Emily to play the roles of both Christ and Job. Anna in particular styles herself as an adoring disciple, writing the Gospel according to Anna.

In the hands of her biographers, Emily becomes a saint, a Job, and a Christ-figure who saves through her suffering. A text is created out of her life, but she herself is read as a text: she is an epistle, a testimony. Shipton fashions the story of her friend's life according to her own typological and literary designs--exploiting her in the process--much in the same way that Emily wrote the book of Edmund and "exploited" him. Anna is the embodiment of the authoritative typological practitioner who takes liberties with the story of another person's life, forcing individual experience to follow a Biblical pattern.

Yet Edmund is guilty of similar "sins". As a biographer, Anna Shipton is to Emily what Edmund became for



his father when he wrote The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (1890). Shipton provides an example of the dubious role of the biographer--as servant, disciple, toady--which Edmund was to adopt in his role as "servile" biographer of his father and the poets. Chapter four takes the Life of Philip Henry Gosse as its central text. In this biography, Edmund casts himself into the often humiliating role of disciple/son, and his story becomes eclipsed by the greater drama of his father's story. Yet the ghostly script of Father and Son is nevertheless present in The Life, and thus biography becomes veiled autobiography. Moreover, like his biographical predecessors, Philip and Anna, the author of The Life makes use of the coercive elements in typology in order to "fashion" his father according to his own narrative designs.

Gosse wrote numerous biographies in the years between the publication of his father's biography in 1890 and his own autobiography in 1907. Robert Browning: Personalia (1890), The Life and Letters of John Donne (1899), and Coventry Patmore (1905) provide examples of how Gosse used literary biography as an excuse to create alternative versions of himself and his father, again exemplifying Gosse's capacity to adopt typology's authoritative relationship to other people's stories. These biographies also served as "rehearsals" for Father and Son, in that they provided him with other father and son characters to depict in narrative form. He could try out alternative fathers and sons, projecting his father and himself into a poetic instead of a

Biblical tradition (though the two are not mutually exclusive in the biographies).

In Jeremy Taylor (1904), Thomas Browne (1905), and the biography of Donne, Gosse records various literary skirmishes between Puritans and Royalists, always siding against the Puritans. The Roundheads are portrayed as the enemies of literature and they serve as ancestors to Emily's Calvinist governess (who defined the sin of storytelling) and Susan Flood, the smasher of Greek idols in Father and Son (205). Edmund's biographies of seventeenth-century writers can be interpreted autobiographically; they foreshadow some of the conflicts between the Puritan father and the poetic son in Father and Son. Gosse seems to apply the civil war tropologically to himself, and thus the earlier biographies serve as an externalized testing ground for the internal war between the literal and literary that divided his soul. Edmund adapted his tropological training to biography--reading the poet's lives as if they were his own.

Edmund's role as biographer provides an analogy of his general struggle to trade the role of disciple for that of master, going from writing the Gospel of his father and the literary men he worshipped to the creation of an autobiographical Gospel of the Son. He writes other men's lives and then his own in order to prevent being written upon by his parents and the Samuel narrative. Yet the irony is that he merely traded one kind of service for another: service to the Lord for service to the Poets.

Chapter six describes how the composition of Father and Son allowed Gosse to progress from fashioning the identities of the poets to the creation of a "fictional" version of himself. He wanted to "fashion his inner life for himself" (F&S 251) in order to avoid capitulating to the demands of the Samuel narrative that his parents imposed on him. Yet in doing so, he draws upon typology's interpretive freedom in relation to texts and people. The chapter examines in detail the typological education that Edmund received, explaining how he used his typological and tropological inheritance to re-write the Biblical tradition in literary terms. Gosse traded his parents' "literal" readings of the scriptures for a more literary method of reading and writing them, yet he refused to acknowledge that the Biblical legacy that was bequeathed to him already contained "literary" and allegorical elements.

The thesis' conclusion places Father and Son in a late Victorian and early Edwardian literary context by comparing it to Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh (1903) and William Hale White's The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) and Mark Rutherford's Deliverance (1885). Both Butler and White wrote autobiographical novels about a journey away from faith, but these narratives are nevertheless dependent upon the typological language of the faith they rejected. Like Edmund, Ernest Pontifex and Mark Rutherford (the protagonists of Butler and White's novels) were earmarked for the ministry in childhood, and they tried throw off the burden of religious dedication by re-

fashioning themselves into their own versions of Biblical characters.

Samuel Butler protests against the tyranny of the Victorian family in The Way of All Flesh, and his weapon is the ironic use of typology; for example, Ernest Pontifex is the unrepentant prodigal who returns home only to rebel against his father (391). Where Butler employs typology satirically, White uses typology and tropology in earnest in The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) and Mark Rutherford's Deliverance (1885). The protagonist of White's autobiographies is a suffering, lonely "Christ" who glories in his nothingness and identifies with the sorrow of Job. Rutherford's autobiography is the one which most resembles seventeenth-century conversion narratives like Bunyan's Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. Yet, as with Gosse, Rutherford's true conversion is to poetry, in his case to Wordsworth's Romantic vision of Nature.

Rutherford compares himself to Paul, describing how Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads: "conveyed to me no new doctrine, and yet the change it wrought in me could only be compared with that which is said to have been wrought on Paul himself by the Divine apparition" (AMR 23). His conversion to literature cannot be conceptualized outside of a typological framework, just as Edmund's revelation of the magic of Virgil is read in terms of the riddle of Samson (F&S 143). Butler, Rutherford, and Gosse are all dependent upon typology for their own literary fictions. They are forced to re-write the theological tradition in which they were raised in order to prevent that tradition from writing

on them. Yet in Gosse's case in particular, the irony is that the Puritan typological tradition has produced literature that is more profound, imaginative, and enduring than his secular poetry and criticism. In this sense, his Biblically-oriented parents could be perceived as following a more "artistic" tradition than himself. He is the prodigal whose literary sins were rivalled by the religious artistry of the parents he sinned against.

Chapter one:  
Typology, the Plymouth Brethren, and Emily Gosse's  
"Recollections"

Fifty years after the death of Emily Gosse in 1857, her son condemned in Father and Son (1907) the theological tradition which she embraced--classifying it as fundamentally uncongenial to the pursuit of literature and fiction. For proof of this sentiment, Edmund quotes an extract from her "secret diary" which reveals the story of how Emily's governess crushed her budding attempts to create fiction when she told Emily that story-telling was a wicked sin (F&S 49). "The Recollections of the Earlier Life of Emily Bowes to the year 1835" is a short spiritual autobiography that Edmund's mother committed to a journal. The "Recollections" provide a starting point for an investigation of the typological and autobiographical roots of Father and Son; the 1835 conversion narrative is a landmark in the Gosse family's literary history which foreshadows Father and Son, a deconversion narrative.

Emily's "Recollections" now reside in the Cambridge University Library Manuscript Room, the alma mater of her brother and where her son would hold the Clark lectureship from 1884 to 1890. The lined pages within the notebook's cardboard cover begin with a vertical list of years, and the list is annotated with abbreviated notes that contain names and dates and memories that belong to a particular year. Complete sentences begin on page eleven with a quotation from Deuteronomy 8:2, a passage which stimulates Emily's reflections about her conversion experience, sins, mercies,

and afflictions. The journal concludes with some "miscellaneous recollections" and a final entry dated January 1836 which reviews the previous year and meditates on the beginning of a new one.

The "Recollections" are the literary and typological ancestor of Father and Son, and in this capacity they provide a typological framework for her son's later literary projects; this framework is doubly typological in that the earlier autobiography sets a precedent for the use of Biblical types, as well as serving as a type itself in relation to Father and Son as antitype. The sin of storytelling which the "Recollections" articulate became the source of the prohibition against fiction in Edmund's childhood, a restriction which aroused his literary wrath in young adulthood. His perception of his parents as the enemies of literature is what lies behind his condemnation of their unimaginative qualities.

However, what this chapter will demonstrate is that typology as exemplified in the hermeneutical practices of the Plymouth Brethren, the sect Emily joined soon after she wrote the "Recollections, offers a more flexible and allegorical method of reading and writing than Edmund admitted in Father and Son. An examination of typology in general, Brethren typology in particular, and the typological methods employed by the "Recollections" reveals a more complex and less "literal-minded" picture of the Puritan literary tradition. The tradition of reading the Bible typologically and writing autobiography was more fertile and powerful than Edmund was willing to acknowledge.

Moreover, the literary fictions of Emily and Edmund are facilitated by the very typological and tropological training which Edmund defined as fatal to creativity.

Before outlining the biography of Emily Gosse and offering a detailed study of her spiritual autobiography, a more extensive definition of typology is in order. An examination of typology and tropology proper and what these concepts meant in practice to the Gosses will serve as a theoretical foundation to the thesis, which relies heavily on the notion that typology is a more imaginative method of reading the Bible and writing personal "scripture" than Edmund said it was. He claimed that his parents were "literal" readers of the Bible, when in fact typology and tropology are very adaptable to "literary" and allegorical purposes. The present chapter is concerned to describe the Biblical, denominational, and biographical contexts of Emily's "Recollections" in order to more fairly evaluate the criticisms of these very contexts in Father and Son.

#### I.i. Preliminary Definitions of Typology and Tropology.

Typology is a method of "reading" the Hebrew Bible for Christian purposes, an interpretative system evident in the Bible itself which later became central for seventeenth-century Puritan writers of autobiography and their nineteenth-century heirs. These Puritan heirs included the Plymouth Brethren community, and by extension the Gosse family. G. H. Lampe, a twentieth-century Biblical critic, explains in "The Reasonableness of Typology" (1957) that



typological and allegorical methods serve to make the Old Testament "readable as a Christian book" (17) and this is what readers like the Gosses were concerned to achieve. Typology is a system which reads persons, things, or events in the Hebrew Bible as divinely-ordained precursors to similar but more perfect and "complete" persons, things, or events in the New Testament. For example, Isaac as sacrificial lamb and obedient son prefigures Christ. In formal terms, Isaac is the type and Christ the antitype. The antitype is for the most part perceived as being greater than the type, as the latter's primary purpose is to illuminate the character of the antitype. Christ is the central object of typological interpretation.

Typology was an important narrative strategy for some of the writers of the New Testament, especially Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It helped to construct the mosaic pattern of history, allegory, and prophecy which composed the "biography" of Jesus. Typology legitimized Jesus' heritage by finding appropriate ancestors for him in the pages of the Hebrew scriptures. These ancestors were perceived as "lesser" characters than the Son they prefigured, and they served to illuminate various aspects of His character, actions, and spiritual destiny. The legitimacy conferred on Jesus through the typological inheritance model was meant to be transmitted to his imitators down through the ages, making them the "true" children of Abraham.

As an interpretive construct which both appropriates and rejects its Jewish inheritance, typology can be read as a

dangerously anti-Semitic system. Yet the relationship between Christian and Jewish scriptures is ambivalent and complicated, resembling a family relationship like the one depicted in Father and Son. Dependency upon the older tradition is characteristic in both cases, as well as a commitment to subvert tradition. According to Lampe:

It is impossible to make sense of the Gospel narratives or of the apostolic preaching which lies behind them unless we accept the view that Jesus himself envisaged his mission in terms of Old Testament prophecy and typology (25).

Leonhard Goppelt, a German Biblical critic who published Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New in 1939, foreshadows Lampe's theory when he emphasizes the fact that both Jesus and the early church "detected a profound relationship between the things he did" and the actions of characters in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, "they used this relationship in the form of genuine typology to describe Jesus' importance and dignity" (Goppelt 62). The world-view of the New Testament writers was profoundly Judaic (Goppelt 198), and it was natural for them to perceive relationships between past and future, Jew and Christian, which grounded their lives and the life of Jesus within the Hebrew tradition. Yet this Judaic world-view did not prevent anti-Semitism, which stemmed in part from Christian "children" criticizing their Jewish "parents".

The relationship between the Jewish and Christian dispensations is one of type to antitype, outline to completed portrait, shadow to fulfilment (as with the Gosse family texts, it is a relationship of dependency and

subversion, with the antitype attempting to eclipse the type). The antitype is always perceived as being greater than the type and yet the historical nature and reality of both must be recognized. Goppelt defines the nature and limits of typology in this way:

Only historical facts--persons, actions, events, and institutions--are material for typological interpretation; words and narratives can be utilized only insofar as they deal with such matters. These things are to be interpreted typologically only if they are considered to be divinely ordained representations or types of future realities that will be even greater and more complete. If the antitype does not represent a heightening of the type, if it is merely a repetition of the type, then it can be called typology only in certain instances and in a limited way (Goppelt 17-18).

Typology is progressive rather than circular and repetitive. Moreover, the "imitative faculty" (F&S 146-150) that is required of the antitype need not prevent it from transcending and eclipsing the type (bordering on making the latter redundant).

Typological thinking makes no apologies for placing the Christian message centre stage at the expense of the Hebrew Bible. As C.H. Dodd explains in According to the Scriptures, typology ransacks the "old" scriptures for types that could help promote and illustrate the kerygma of the Gospels (12). Typology is not interested in the Hebrew scriptures as literature or as a sacred book which is the foundation of an independent and complete religion in itself. Instead, for the most part, the Old Testament is regarded as a testimony which prefigures greater things to come. Yet some of the books of the New Testament employ typological strategies that at least acknowledge the Hebrew

Bible's role as forerunner to the New Testament. As noted earlier, Lampe argues that the early Christian writers had to make a choice between discarding the ancient scriptures altogether or translating them into Christian terms (17). So also Edmund made sense of the Bible by translating it into his own terms.

According to twentieth-century critics like Lampe and Goppelt, typology's distinguishing characteristic is its commitment to historical, literal truth (which parallels how Edmund defined his parents' attitude to scripture). It rejects classification as a formal critical method and to call it an aesthetic device like metaphor would be considered an insult. Typology claims to be uninterested in art; as Goppelt asserted, historical facts constitute the only proper material for typological use. But not just any historical fact qualifies as a type or antitype. Implicit in the typological system is a particular and peculiarly religious understanding of history. For Christians, the past can never be seen in the same way again after the Passion and the resurrection. Christ is at the center of history and everything must be read forward or backwards from the vantage point of the "year of our Lord".

The selective attitude to history of which typology is guilty suggests that there is an element of "lying" in an ostensibly "literal" and "historical" system. In his 1901 article "The Custom of Biography", Gosse claimed for the biographer the artistic prerogative of "selecting" and shaping his material after his own fashion. So also, typology selects and chooses its subjects in a way which is

less straightforward than it would like to admit (as history shades into propaganda, "literal truth" into ideological symbolism).

### I.ii. The Symbolic and Allegorical Dimensions of Typology.

Ambivalence between the literal and the symbolic in typology can be detected in a definition of typology given by a Victorian theologian called Thomas Hartwell Horne, whose writings are examined by George Landow in Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows (1980). According to the second volume of Horne's An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures (1834):

A type, in its primary and literal meaning, simply denotes a rough draught, or less accurate model, from which a more perfect image is made; but, in the sacred or theological sense of the term, a type may be defined to be a symbol of something future and distant, or an example prepared and evidently designed by God to prefigure that future thing. What is thus prefigured is called the antitype (527).

Horne associates the type with a symbol, thus suggesting a more allegorical identity for typology. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church differentiates typology from allegory by the former's ability to keep sight of "the historical reference". Types signify something more specific than allegorical symbols; they do not enjoy a symbol's polyvalence because they are limited by historical context. In practice, however, the distinction between allegory--in which one thing stands for another--and typology becomes blurred. Allegory provides an element of creative flexibility that the literal sense denies. It is

possible to "contaminate" the historical purity and "self-discipline" of typology with allegorical symbolism. And this contamination might be inevitable.

The Plymouth Brethren's typology was often allegorical in flavor. An example taken from the writings of a nineteenth-century Brethren writer, Andrew Jukes, further illustrates the shadowy line that distinguishes literal type from symbolic meaning. Jukes' The Law of the Offerings (1859, 4th ed.) explains that

The Types are . . . a set of pictures or emblems directly from the hand of God, by which He would teach his children things otherwise all but incomprehensible. In the Types . . . God takes His Son to pieces. . . . the Types of the last dispensation was teaching His children their letters. In this dispensation He is teaching them to put these letters together, and they find that the letters . . . spell Christ" (5,11 emphasis added).

This passage supports the notion that typology is a method of reading; in fact, the very process of learning to read cannot be achieved without the "letters" that typology provides. Typology "deconstructs" Christ down to his fundamental parts and then builds him up again in the Christian scriptures.

Jukes' epistemological metaphor is complemented by other elements in his definition which suggest typology's metaphorical possibilities. "Picture" and "emblem" indicate the presence of allegory, as an emblem is "an object symbolizing or suggesting another object" (and the object does not necessarily have to be affiliated with history). The Epistle to the Hebrews is similarly uncommitted to a strictly historical definition of typology. Words that

describe types in the Epistle include: sketch, shadow, symbol, parable and "mere copy", all of which suggest that typology is more adaptable to symbolic purposes than critics like Gosse, Lampe, and Goppelt appear to admit. Typology is a language in itself--with its own letters and figures--and as such it is open to multiple meanings and interpretive instability. Thus, within the Bible itself, as well as the Brethren tradition, Edmund Gosse's emphasis on the "unliterariness" of typology is contradicted, making him seem more historical and "literal" than the parents he maligned for their lack of imagination.

In his essay, "The Anatomy of Metaphor" in The Social Use of Metaphor (1977), anthropologist J. David Sapir argues that a metaphor's anatomy is constructed by yoking two different things or concepts together. The metaphor receives its "color" from the resonance between the two:

The metaphoric . . . process is not a simple game of substitution, but rather a creative game where the pregnant . . . interplay of two disparate terms provides insight that, although it might at times be trivial (Put a tiger in your tank), can also be . . . profound and revealing of important and deep cultural understandings (32).

This process is comparable to typological thinking, which sets two persons, events, or things alongside each other in order to deepen and round out the meaning of both. Both typology and symbolism receive their significance from conceptual relationships which seek out what Sapir calls an awareness of "simultaneous likeness and unlikeness" (9). Both can be described as literary devices. Yet typology is ambitious for itself and makes the paradoxical claim that types and antitypes are historical symbols which express

spiritual facts, thus making it difficult to separate out the allegorical from the literal sense.

If typology is a hybrid of history and allegory, it emphatically does not want to define itself as an artistic technique. This is a problem which is borne out in the genre of autobiography, where the issue of truth versus lying is a bone of contention which raises questions about how far an autobiography can be "fiction" and still maintain its integrity. The fact that the symbolic aspects of autobiography are troublesome in the same way that they are for typology could provide support for the argument that autobiographies like Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners and Father and Son are "scriptural" in nature. Both the Bible and the genre of autobiography rely on the symbolic dimension of language in order to express spiritual "reality" yet at the same time they make definite claims to being "true".

The tension between historical truth and artistic fiction in typology can in part be explained by the differing priorities of typology's divided self. For example, allegory is more concerned to bring hidden truths to light than to ground these truths in history. Lampe examines the conflict between typology and allegory, splitting up an internal division within typology itself into two kinds of typology (dividing the womb of typology into a warring Jacob and Esau). He explains that one type of typology "consists in a recognition of historical correspondences." This species is to be distinguished

from another kind of typology which rests, not on an interpretation of history, but on a particular quasi-



Platonic doctrine of the relation of the literal sense of Scripture--the outward form or 'letter' of the sacred writings--to eternal spiritual reality concealed . . . beneath the literal sense (30).

In "The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology", K.J. Woollcombe confirms the conclusions of his fellow essayist<sup>1</sup>, emphasizing typology's ability to remain within a historical framework of revelation in contrast to allegory's mystical quest for hidden meanings (40).

Goppelt paraphrasing F. Torm states that "[allegory] goes its own way regardless of the literal interpretation, while the typological use of Scripture begins with the literal meaning" (16). This contrast between the freedom of the symbolic and the restrictive "yoke" of the literal is the central aesthetic problem that Edmund Gosse articulates in Father and Son. He judged his parents to be narrowly literal and typological where he was imaginative and "allegorical". Yet this split is artificial--a creation similar to that made by theorists like Lampe--and it suggests that Edmund was unwilling to grant the Puritan and Brethren tradition the unstated artistic credentials it possessed.

Edmund failed to see the symbolical thinking that is necessary to make historical links from testament to testament in the first place (reminiscent of Sapir's "pregnant interplay" between two disparate entities). Typology encourages the reader to jump from context to context through time and space, and this "literary" leaping is essentially creative rather than empirical, an idea that will be more closely examined in the discussion of

tropology. In his 1959 essay "Figura" in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (1984), Erich Auerbach reads typological creativity in terms of religious understanding:

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also a second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the first. . . . Only the understanding of the two is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions (53 emphasis added).

An exercise of the imagination is necessary in order to make connections between things and to understand the relationship between seemingly different conceptual categories and events. As Jukes observes in The Law of the Offerings, the types "require more spiritual intelligence than many Christians can bring to them" (6).

If typology is tainted with creative elements, what might constitute some of its other narrative or "fictional" possibilities? What capacity does it have to encourage and commit the "sin of storytelling"? First of all, in its effort to mine the Hebrew Bible for types, Christian typology inevitably takes them out of context and "lies" about them, forcing them to confess the "truth" about their hidden prefigurative secrets. By making the Hebrew scriptures "readable" for Christianity, typology essentially re-writes the scriptures (a re-writing process which finds a parallel in Father and Son).

The authors of the sacred Christian texts made the Hebrew Bible's meaning dependent on their own stories and in the process they altered the meaning of both testaments:

they felt free to modify the details of the narrative tradition in order to bring out the meaning which it possessed for them when it was expressed in imagery

derived from the Old Testament history" (Lampe 19 emphasis added).

The narrative modification worked both ways--from Old Testament to New Testament and vice versa--in that Jesus' story was made to conform to the plot structure and imagery of the scriptures while at the same time the ancient stories themselves were subjected to a Christian reconstruction that transformed the way they were read. The freedom to modify implies "poetic" license, the freedom which Gosse coveted in order to re-write the Samuel narrative.

Christian typology's ability to play around with history is part of what qualifies it as an interpretive system that is congenial to narrative fiction (which is ironic, considering its claims to historical veracity). The essence of the typological vision of history is retrospection, reading back into the past from the historical standpoint of Christ's birth. In order to remain true to this vision, typology reads history backwards while claiming that the past was leading (and reading) up to the present dispensation all along. In practice, this kind of retrospective reading means re-writing history with the help of typological methods. This is a writing strategy which strives to make the Israelites' story build up narrative suspense and strategic delay until the Christian story can be completed. Typology tries to force two stories into one continuous narrative and at the same time disguise its art and make it seem "natural", as if the whole story read from beginning to end in an inevitable progression.

In Reading for the Plot (1984), Peter Brooks discusses what he perceives to be one of the "problems" of narrative fiction:

prior events, causes, are so only retrospectively, in a reading back from the end. . . . The detective story, as a kind of dime-store modern version of "wisdom literature," is useful in displaying the double logic most overtly, using the plot of the inquest to find, or construct, a story of the crime which will offer just those features necessary to the thematic coherence we call a solution, while claiming, of course, that the solution has been made necessary by the crime (29).

Typology's crime is to make the Jewish facts fit the Christian "solution" and pretend that the salvific teleology of the Passion story was made necessary by the sinful beginnings of the patriarchs (this is particularly evident in Pauline typology). Typology "cooks" the scripture to serve its own ends. Take an example from Romans 9, which tries to define the requirements for those who can legitimately claim to be a descendant of Jacob:

For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants; but 'It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.' This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants (Rom. 9:6-8).

The prophecy in Genesis 25:23 about Rebekah's twins--"the elder shall serve the younger"--is to be fulfilled in the Christian era. God will love Jacob, whom typology claims for Christianity, and hate Esau, who represents the Jews (Rom. 9:12-13).

By using quotations from the Hebrew scriptures to undermine the legitimacy of these same scriptures, some of the New Testament books artfully "lie" about the meaning of

the passages they have cited. They lie to serve their own purposes, in this case, to appropriate the birthright of the chosen people for themselves. In this sense, the distortions of Christian, particularly Pauline, typology can be seen as exploitative and ideologically dangerous. They attempt to make the patriarchal covenant redundant by appropriating it for Christianity's uses, and then to add insult to injury they deny that the true promise ever applied to the Hebrews. Here, the art of lying operates on dubious moral ground.

#### I.iii. The Definition of Tropology,

If typology is a flexible system in relation to allegory and symbolism, another aspect of its interpretive flexibility is its openness to being used in a personal context--offering the chance to both read and "write" the Bible autobiographically. According to Landow's Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, tropology can be defined as the personal or moral application of types to one's self, something which often leads to the imitation of Christ (49) or other Biblical characters. Distinctions exist between typology and tropology, but these distinctions are somewhat artificial in that typology and tropology tend to shade into one another. Strictly speaking, typology operates between two texts or sets of texts (the Old and the New Testament), but tropology operates between texts and readers. Tropology yokes together a text and any believer--from the early Christian era to the nineteenth-century--and makes it

possible to read the scriptures as if they were written just for you. Tropology also makes it legitimate, even imperative, for individual believers to compare themselves to and impersonate Biblical figures. For example, in The Law of the Offerings Jukes encourages his readers to compare their experience to the Israelite's Exodus if they want to learn more about personal redemption (32).

Typology, which makes connections between two very different texts, can easily lead to tropology, which yokes a text and a person from very different contexts together (like the Samuel narrative and Edmund Gosse). For example, the heavily typological Epistle to the Hebrews encourages Christian believers to connect the rebellious disobedience of the Israelites to their own experience, warning them that "while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it" (Heb. 4:1, emphasis added).

Typology and tropology are compatible systems of interpretation. Typology, as exemplified in the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews, can facilitate autobiographical readings of the scriptures by appealing to the reader to make direct comparisons between his life and the life of Biblical characters. For example, in Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, Landow describes the common practice of taking the Israelites as types of individual Victorian antitypes. Encouraged by texts like Romans 9, Victorian Christians saw themselves as the true "heirs of salvation" (46). In doing so, they took the Hebrew Scriptures out of context and "re-wrote" them, a process of

writing "fiction" which yet again implies poetic license (and another check to Edmund's evaluation of the typological tradition).

Landow outlines which types can be "legitimately" applied to nineteenth-century believers (without becoming "gratuitous" tropology that imposes one's name on the scriptures without any obvious scriptural encouragement). He takes the example of the serpent-bruising prophecy in Genesis 3:15 and describes how a Victorian preacher, Melville

holds that 'according to the fair laws of interpretation . . . the prophecy must be fulfilled in more than one individual', and while the seed of the woman is chiefly Christ Himself, this prophetic type necessarily has additional antitypes or fulfillments. Taking Eve as a type of the Church, Melville points out that this divine institution may be considered from 'three points of view'--'first, as represented by the head, which is Christ; secondly, collectively as a body; thirdly, as resolved into its separate members' (33).

The third category licenses individuals to personally bruise the serpent. In this sense, the Genesis prophecy, "[demanded] fulfillment both in the life of Christ and subsequently in the lives of His worshippers" (Landow 47). We will see in section four of this chapter how Emily Gosse identified herself as a fulfilment of Old Testament types. She begins her autobiography with a quotation from Deuteronomy 8, interpreting her own life according to the Israelites' experience in the wilderness.

Typology was a central feature of the Victorian intellectual context. Landow states that the "first two-thirds of the nineteenth-century saw a great, almost astonishing, revival of biblical typology, which left its

firm impress upon Victorian literature, art, and thought" (3). But it extended beyond the theology textbook, in that typology and its brother, tropology, was a way of thinking and reading that took "everything in the scriptures, even the most trivial detail, as bearing the impress of God".

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became accustomed to finding such meanings outside the Bible as well, and this habit of mind was in complete accord with Evangelical rules of interpretation that found types reaching fulfillment in the life of the individual worshipper (Landow 118).

Typology and tropology arose in tandem with the wave of Evangelical revival that occurred in the early part of the nineteenth-century, a revival of which the Brethren movement was also an expression. Thus Emily's 1835 "Recollections" are placed within the historical context of the Evangelical spirit of the times; her use of typology is also typical, and the fact that it was "in the air" explains why typology influenced her even before she joined the Brethren.

The individual application of types serves as a complement to what Hans Frei defines in The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (1974) as one of the elements of pre-critical Biblical interpretation: "since the world truly rendered by combining biblical narratives into one was indeed the one and only real world, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader" (3). This attitude effectively sums up that of the elder Gosses. For example, in Abraham and His Children, Emily interpreted the words of Pharaoh's daughter to Moses' mother--"Take this child and nurse it for me and I will pay thee thy wages"



(Exodus 2:9)--as a direct warning to Victorian mothers not to skimp on their children's education lest exposure to the lower classes at cheaper schools weaken their moral fibre (A&C 122).

The notion that the lives of Biblical characters have direct historical relevance to our lives is not unique to the post-Reformation era though. The classic four-fold method of interpretation that influenced Medieval thinkers included a tropological or moral understanding of scripture and its relevance to the soul. Jukes' definition of typology in the passage from The Law of the Offerings suggests the vital connection between the Types and the reader's response to them--God put them in the Bible to facilitate our understanding. Tropology made it legitimate, even necessary, for believers to apply Biblical characters and events to their own lives. For autobiographers--from seventeenth-century Puritans to Plymouth Brethren "saints"--these typological pretexts provided patterns upon which to read the story of their life in tropological terms. Tropology is what allows you to make your life readable as a Biblical story.

## II.i. The History of the Plymouth Brethren.

Typology and tropology were reading methods employed by the Plymouth Brethren. Developing in the late 1820's and early 1830's out of Protestant ecumenical meetings and conferences for the study of prophecy in Dublin, the Brethren movement spread to England and took root in Plymouth about 1831. As noted in the last section, the Brethren movement emerged in the context of the general trend towards Evangelism in the first third of the nineteenth-century and thus places Emily's conversion within a larger historical framework. Harold Rowdon's The Origins of the Brethren 1825-1850 (1967) explains that "Dissent experienced spectacular growth in the early nineteenth century. Methodism . . . constituted an important new element in English dissent" and the older denominations, like the Congregational and Baptist churches, began "to throb with new life" (6). Rowdon further outlines the political and social background of the Brethren movement and attributes its interest in prophecy and apocalypse to historical events in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century:

The shadow of the French Revolution lay darkly across Europe. Though Napoleon had been defeated at Waterloo in 1815 . . . the forces of nationalism, democracy, and anti-clericalism . . . could not be held back. 1830 was a year of revolution in Europe. There was ferment in England, too. . . . Parliament passed in 1832 the Reform Act. . . . (2).

Belief in the imminent second Advent of Christ was a distinguishing characteristic of the Brethren movement. More specifically, they believed that "prior to the open

return of Christ in judgement, He will return secretly in order to remove His people from a doomed world" (Rowdon 16)<sup>2</sup>. Rowdon argues that the Brethren "followed no theological system, since they regarded the Scriptures alone as authoritative, but their religious beliefs were characteristically evangelical" (24)--that is, evangelical "with a Calvinistic complexion" (227). The Bible was considered the sole authority on all matters concerning the church, with the Brethren looking "to the Bible, and the Bible alone, for the solution of the ecclesiastical and religious problems of the day" (Rowdon 37). A third distinguishing feature was the Brethren's early commitment to ecumenism and the unity of all Christian believers.

One of the Brethren's main founders and theologians was John Darby, a former Anglican minister. According to F. Roy Coad's A History of the Brethren Movement (1968), Darby, like many prominent Brethren leaders, had grown restless under the elitism (75) and perceived Erastianism of the Church of England in Ireland (27,31). Also, there was a sense that it was desirable to return to the simplicity of the early Apostolic Church.

Rowdon argues that the roots of the Brethren community in Dublin can be found in three basic groups:

a number of small groups . . . began independently but soon coalesced to form a single entity. There is evidence for three groups, one composed of dissatisfied dissenters, another comprising members of the established church whose spiritual aspirations remained unfulfilled in that church, and a third which evidently contained both dissenters and churchmen (37).

Despite the Brethren's claims that they were free of sectarian prejudice, power struggles between Darby and the leader of the assembly at Plymouth, B.W. Newton, led to an open split in the movement in 1848.

When Emily Bowes and Philip Henry Gosse joined the Hackney Brethren in the early 1840's<sup>3</sup>, the churches in the West Country--mainly Plymouth and Bristol--were still largely unified, and the North London churches growing in membership. By the time they were married eight years later, the Brethren had quarrelled and divided themselves into Open and Exclusive Brethren. Apart from the fact that the Open Brethren seemed to be uphold Ecumenical principles to a greater extent, one of the central differences which emerged was that the Darbyites (or Exclusive Brethren) continued the Anglican practice of infant baptism and the Open Brethren, which included the Hackney congregation, did not (Coad 123-24). This directly affected Edmund, in that his "adult" baptism at the age of ten was the central event of his childhood.

Edmund describes the Open or Independent Brethren as having

no ritual, no appointed minister, no government, no hierarchy of any kind; they eschew all that is systematic or vertebrate; their manner of worship is the most socialistic hitherto invented (Life of PHG 213).

The Brethren's relative lack of centralized leadership made them a congenial home for the individualistic spirit (Coad 164). This provides an alternative and more attractive perspective that balances out Edmund's criticism of "evangelical religion, or any religion in violent form" (F&S

248). Ironically, the very theological system which restricted his independence nevertheless nurtured the seeds of personal freedom and extreme individuality. Just as typology offered him the opportunity to be creative, so the Brethren movement provided a context whereby a person could create his own religious forms and rituals.

In England, the Plymouth Brethren attracted members of the upper classes<sup>4</sup>, and the group in Hackney consisted of educated people, most of whom could read the New Testament in the original Greek. Coad writes: "The character of most of the men of the early movement was in general cultured, even dilettante. Where it was harsh and ascetic, these were the eccentricities of men of cultivated sensibility" (246). The Brethren represented an other-worldly spirit that appealed to those who wished to escape from the prosaic world of secular life (Coad 263). Here, Edmund's evaluation of the Puritans as Philistines who thump the Bible and are "devoid of sympathetic imagination" (F&S 78) is contradicted. Many of the Brethren possessed the sensibilities of the mystic, and far from being "vulgar" in a social sense, they drew their membership from the elite classes<sup>5</sup>.

The "Saints", as they called themselves, were innovative readers of the Bible. They internalized its language and their scriptural interpretations were often original and profound. Edmund himself admits that their "exposition" of the Scriptures was "deep, ingenious, and unconventional" (Life of PHG 214). This intense hermeneutical activity was the product of close readings that were often personally

applied. Ann Thwaite recounts in Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape (1985) how the Hackney saints often "pored for hours over a few words" in a Bible verse (13). They were particularly talented at wresting typological interpretations from the Hebrew scriptures, combining them with a sense of the allegorical and a commitment to personal application. The Brethren were not always as literal in their approach to the Bible as Edmund suggests.

### II.ii. The Hermeneutical Techniques of the Plymouth Brethren.

As the Gosses' thinking and writing was largely influenced by the typological practices of the Brethren, a closer look at some of the Biblical commentaries written by Brethren authors such as Andrew Jukes and W.H. Soltau is in order. Typology was a method used by many Victorian autobiographers and novelists--such as Carlyle, Ruskin, and Charlotte Brontë--to interpret their experience. The Gosses did not read novels, so their typological role models were by necessity provided by Brethren writers. An examination of the "literary" and theological methods of the Brethren will also offer a contrasting view to the perceived bankruptcy of Philip and Emily's literary training.

Part of the Brethren's interest in typology arose out of their study of prophecy, an interest which the Gosses shared. Edmund interpreted their attitude towards it as a manifestation of their "rigid and iconoclastic literalness" (F&S 78). He continues:

This was curiously exemplified in the very lively interest which they both took in what is called 'the interpretation of prophecy', and particularly in unwrapping the dark sayings bound up in the Book of Revelation. In their impartial survey of the Bible, they came to this collection of solemn and splendid visions, sinister and obscure, and they had no intention of allowing these to be merely stimulating to the fancy. . . . (78).

Edmund evaluated their reading of Revelation as "literal" and "impartial", but their complete absorption in prophecy seems to suggest a more involved and committed engagement with prophetic texts than his scientific terminology implies. Prophecy "took the place which is taken, in profaner families, by cards or the piano. It was a distraction; it took them completely out of themselves" (F&S 79).

Prophecy is to be distinguished from typology in that in the former, events foreshadowed have not yet found their antitype in the future, whereas in typology, type and antitype can be found in the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Yet both systems of interpretation require a certain sensitivity to the relationship between past and present, as well as an eye for repeated types and symbols throughout the Bible. The annual Powerscourt Conferences (1831-36) in Dublin for the study of prophecy were a central formative influence on the Brethren--providing a means of drawing them together and articulating their identity. Rowdon states that the 1832 Powerscourt Conference featured in its prolegomena:

an examination of quotations from the Old Testament found in the New and of the prophetic import of each book of the Bible, with special reference to the three great feasts of the Jews, the blessings bestowed by Jacob on his sons, the parables in the

Gospels and the epistles to the seven churches in the Apocalypse (92).

Thus the Gosses' study of the Apocalypse is placed in the context of the Brethren movement, as well as their propensity to compare the Old Testament with the New.

Another source of typological interest was the comparison between God's dealings with the Israelites and with the Christians. As early as the 1832 conference "attention was being drawn to the relationship between the people of God in the two Testaments" (Rowdon 92). Their concern with the two covenants mirrors that of Paul in a passage like Galatians 4:24-26, which compares the Sarah and Hagar Covenants. Andrew Jukes, a former Anglican clergyman from Hull who became something of a mystic, makes reference to Pauline typology in the opening chapter to The Law of the Offerings (composed in 1847). Jukes quotes Galatians 4 and adds the commentary: "Now all this is dispensational. Hagar, the handmaid, and a bond-woman, stands the perfect type of the covenant of law: Sarah, the true wife, and a free-woman, the representative of the covenant of grace" (17).

Coad claims that

During his time with the Brethren, Jukes's writings--notably The Law of the Offerings and The Types of Genesis--had had a great and lasting influence on Biblical interpretation among them, and (together with Soltau's works on the Tabernacle) were in no small degree responsible for the typology which later became second nature to them (79).

As a child, Edmund loathed Jukes and called him an "abomination" (F&S 50). The latter was an advocate of the kind of typological reading which tried to entrap Edmund into the Samuel narrative.



Rowdon gives some biographical details about Jukes. He was "a serviceman . . . who was converted through reading the Bible . . . and who entered the ministry of the Church of England" (174). Yet because of his conscientious objection to "the baptismal service and some the Articles" Jukes "never took priest's orders". He was suspended and "began to preach in the open air, and gathered his converts in a room where he held meetings for mutual exhortation and communion" (174). He eventually returned to the established church in 1869 and viewed his earlier writing as "immature". Nevertheless, The Law of the Offerings "came to be regarded as the classic typological interpretation of its subject" (174).

The Law of the Offerings provides support for the argument that typology is not strictly a "literal" method of reading the Bible. In his first chapter, "The Types in General", Jukes explains:

The very words which, in one dispensation and to one people, conveyed a literal command, to be obeyed literally, may, in another age and dispensation, supply a type of some part of God's work or purpose; while in the selfsame passage the humble believer of every age may find matter of comfort or warning, according to his need (3).

Here we have three ways of reading--literally, figuratively, and tropologically--and typology is associated with the second, more symbolical mode of reading, instead of the first. Jukes' Christian dispensation is not composed of believers who read literally, but who are sensitive to "pictures" and "emblems" in the Bible (Jukes 5). The movement from type to antitype is not necessarily historical and horizontal, but instead the type opens up vertically in

its expression of ideal truth. In Jukes' words: "The realities which the Types represent are in themselves truths and facts the most elevated" (5 emphasis added). Like allegorical symbols, types represent something (rather than being a concrete entities in themselves); they point to abstract truths instead of "historical" antitypes.

A gifted religious mind is a prerequisite for typological reading. Jukes declares that to "apprehend" the types:

requires a certain measure of spiritual capacity and habitual exercise in the things of God. . . . The mere superficial glance upon the Word . . . brings no corresponding idea to the mind of the reader (6).

Spiritual apprehension<sup>6</sup>--a phrase which implies passionate, even mystical insight--is a poet's art and requires the ability to see correspondences between things which the "superficial" reader misses. Thus the man who was an "abomination" to Edmund and who was condemned for stunting his growth as a poet was actually a highly poetic reader and "literary critic" of the Bible<sup>7</sup>. For Jukes, typological insight arises out of "spiritual communion" and deep thought (13). The fact that the elder Gosses read Jukes implies that they felt spiritually and "artistically" qualified, thus providing a "literary" history for their son in the form of poetic theology.

Jukes defined the purpose of typology as one of synthesis and the creative "putting together" of unlike things. The old dispensation provided the alphabet, but the new dispensation actually creates words (11). Furthermore: "In the next dispensation He will teach us what Christ means" (11). Making words out of a string of meaningless letters

is essentially a creative act. It is metaphorical in Sapir's sense of the word, in that it implies the ability to select disparate letters and fashion them into a coherent new entity--a word which spells "Christ". The word is created out of new combinations of unlike to unlike. And typological interpretation calls upon the imagination to see correspondences between images, characters, and events in the two Testaments. Far from conforming to Edmund's narrow and "literal" image of it, typology invites a figural approach to reading and writing.

#### II.iii. Allegory and the Brethren.

We have seen how typology can easily shade into allegory, and an influential Brethren writer which exemplifies this tendency is H. W. Soltau. As Rowdon recounts, Soltau experienced Evangelical conversion in 1837 (around the same time as Emily Gosse). A Cambridge educated barrister, he

gave up his profession in order to devote himself to the study of the Scriptures and the work of the assembly in Plymouth. He was a great exponent of the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, a method of Biblical exegesis that was to become common among the Brethren. His work on The Tabernacle, the Priesthood and the Offerings was regarded as definitive (Rowdon 161).

With typology and allegory as confirmed methods of interpretation, the intellectual picture which emerges of the Brethren is far more complex and intelligent than critics like Edmund Gosse acknowledged. Allegory, a system in which one type or symbol can have multiple meanings and point to abstract ideas beyond itself, is a highly

imaginative method of reading, whereby poetic license is almost unlimited. Allegory allows a believer to interpret types figuratively, and if abused, can impose highly individualistic, fanciful, and eclectic meanings on types. The resulting interpretation might bear little resemblance to the type in the text.

Certain passages from Soltau's An Exposition of the Tabernacle, the Priestly Garments, and the Priesthood (n.d.) illustrate the allegorical method. For instance, he writes as follows about the drapes that adorn the Hebrew temple:

The varied colours . . . of which some of the beautiful draperies were fashioned, attracted and pleased the eye of the beholder, both by their brilliancy and tasteful arrangement. So does the eye of faith explore and delight in the display of God manifest in the flesh (Soltau 4).

This intellectual leap from draperies to Christ's flesh is allegorical and implies the ability to create analogies. The word "so" is what connects the two categories--drapes and flesh--and provides the conceptual means of seeing the correspondence between the two. Other phrases used by Soltau suggest his talent at analogy--"it was like" and "so also" (364, 372). His ability to see similes is what facilitates allegorical interpretation.

The gold and blue colours in the "vail" of the temple are also read allegorically: "If the gold was a type of the glory, majesty, and eternity of the Son of God, blue will fitly represent the grace and love He manifested as declaring the character of God" (Soltau 7). The colors do not directly correspond to a historical antitype in the New Testament, but instead represent abstract ideas. It is

almost as if Soltau makes it up as he goes along; the colors represent what he thinks they should represent. This freedom to manipulate typology is what Edmund claimed for himself in Father and Son. The irony is that his act of hermeneutical rebellion was not an original crime; allegorical "license" was already practised by the very tradition he rebelled against.

### III. Biographical Outline of Emily Gosse 1806-1857.

Emily was not always a member of the Plymouth Brethren community, nor an experienced interpreter of prophecy and typology. This section will provide an outline of her religious development from infant baptism to adult conversion, paying attention to her methods of reading the Bible and her later exposure to the Brethren's methods of exegesis. However, it must be kept in mind that the outline of her biography is necessarily sketchy, as very little is known about her early life. What information there is to be gained must be re-constructed from diaries, letters, and reminiscences, a task which Thwaite's biography of Edmund Gosse has helped to accomplish.

Emily Bowes was born in 1806 into a family whose pedigree was enhanced by American worthies such as John Hancock and Nicholas Bowes (MA of Harvard 1723)<sup>8</sup>. She was baptized in the Church of England and her sponsors came from the gentry<sup>9</sup>. However, in early childhood, Emily's father enjoyed himself too much on his estate in North Wales, and it did not take him long to squander his entire inheritance.

Emily disapproved of her father's "splendid capacity for the dispersion of wealth" (Life of PHG 216), but Edmund later confessed, "for my own part, I believe I should have liked my reprobate maternal grandfather" (F&S 36-37).

At seventeen, Emily began work as a governess and she continued in that profession until she was thirty-five. According to Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape, Emily's wages went towards sending her brother Edmund to Cambridge, although she continued to work after he was granted his degree (Thwaite 14). Emily's own educational credentials were impressive; William Bowes provided his daughter with an extraordinary education for a Victorian girl. She was taught French, Latin, and Greek--and she later learned German and Hebrew<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, her linguistic skills were supplemented by a thorough knowledge of the scriptures.

Father and Son describes how Edmund's parents defined their faith according to the precepts of the Plymouth Brethren, but Emily was not a "brother" until the early 1840's, and even then "she had little spiritual and no intellectual sympathy" with the saints (F&S 40). This ambiguous feeling about dissent, which remained even after she formally rejected the Church of England, characterized Emily's religious preferences during her governess years (1824-1841). The miscellaneous section of "Recollections" provides clues to explain why she was divided on the subject:

My mother at Exmouth several times took me to . . . chapel, which had a very great influence on me, viz. gave me a great prepossession in favour of the dissenters, which though after years has corrected, has prevented my ever feeling any of the common prejudices against them ("Recollections" 24).

After the Bowes family's fall from fortune, they moved from Wales to Exmouth (Emily was nine), and they stayed there until she was thirteen. Exposure at that uncertain time to religion of an enthusiastic, Evangelical variety affected her greatly and she returned to the preferences of her childhood in middle age<sup>11</sup>.

What was it that "corrected in after years" (i.e. the years between adolescence and early middle age) Emily's original attraction to the chapel? Emily's first employer was a Reverend John Hawkins who resided in Berkshire (Thwaite 14). According to an 1841 letter to her American cousin, Sarah Stoddard, Emily was a governess in the clergyman's household for fourteen years, and then she accepted employment with Sir Charles Musgrave of Brighton, a personage who, like the Rev. Hawkins, would presumably have disapproved of non-Anglican religion<sup>12</sup>. Although social pressures from the families she served might have forced her to question her bias toward dissent or drive it underground, she claims in her journal that she has "always had a preference for evangelical religion" ("Recollections" 30, emphasis added).

Thus the religious record seems very ambivalent and confused. Emily's early preference for the chapel was suppressed in later life, but when she joined a dissenting group in middle age, she seemed to long for the social respectability that the Established Church offered. She appears to have never felt completely at home in either camp. Part of this ambiguity could be attributed to the contradictions inherent in early nineteenth-century

Evangelical Anglicanism and, conversely, the Anglican roots of the Brethren movement.

Emily's early preference for Evangelical religion, however ambivalent, was openly expressed after she gave up governessing for good in 1841 to care for her parents, who were living in Clapham, London. She joined the Plymouth Brethren in Hackney, walking from Clapham to Hackney every Sunday (which seems to contradict Edmund's estimate of her as being unsympathetic to the Brethren). Although conditioned by early exposure to dissent and an encounter with the Moravian church in 1828, Emily's first significant step away from the Anglican church came when she met a glamorous relative of hers, a Mr. Hancock, who was a Baptist missionary in India. This weakness for holy men is in keeping with an emotional preference she confessed to in her journal: "I always loved clergymen, particularly Mr. Marsh, at Hampstead for whose preaching I would have sacrificed any enjoyment" ("Recollections" 22).

Emily was also impressed with Mr. Hancock's non-denominational associates. In a letter dated September 16, 1841 (cited above), she describes these Christians to her cousin, Sarah Stoddard:

the Christians among whom I met him [Hancock], were not belonging to . . . any sect, but a collection of Christians who meet as such out of all the different sects, and are endeavouring to revive the brotherly love of the early Christians, by persuading all who love the Lord Jesus Christ to meet together without quarrelling about their little differences: taking the Bible only as their only rule of life, the Holy Spirit as their teacher and God as their only head and master (Cambridge University Library, Rare Books).



As we have seen, by the time Emily joined the Brethren movement it had been gathering strength and numbers for a little over a decade. In Father and Son, Edmund tells the story of how his parents joined the movement:

She had started from the Anglican standpoint, he from the Wesleyan, and each, almost without counsel from others . . . had come to take up precisely the same attitude towards all divisions of the Protestant Church, that, namely, of detached and unbiased contemplation. . . . Hence, by a process of selection, my Father and Mother alike had gradually, without violence, found themselves shut outside all Protestant communions, and at last they met only with a few extreme Calvinists like themselves, on terms of what may almost be called negation--with no priests, no ritual, no festivals, no ornament of any kind, nothing but the Lord's Supper and the exposition of Holy Scripture drawing these austere spirits into any sort of cohesion. They called themselves 'the Brethren', simply; a title enlarged by the world outside into 'Plymouth Brethren' (37).

The "cohesion" that the scriptures provided for the Brethren and followers like Philip and Emily Gosse became the suffocating yoke that Edmund tried to throw off in Father and Son. When the elder Gosses joined the Brethren, the foundation was laid for the all-pervading influence of the scriptures. Without any other religious forms and patterns to structure their thinking, the Gosses relied on the Bible to provide meaning for their everyday thoughts and actions. They tried to conduct their lives from within a Biblical and typological world-view.

Emily possessed educational and intellectual qualities which more than prepared her to examine the scriptures on the same level as the Hackney Brethren when she joined them in 1841. All of Emily's writings testify to her broad and profound knowledge of the scriptures<sup>13</sup>. She was also experienced at prophetic interpretation. In Philip Gosse's

A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse (1857), he recollects that his wife had been "a diligent student of the Prophetic Word" (54) since the early 1830's. She believed that "the notes of time which are connected with the fall of Babylon and its dominant wild beast . . . cannot have their terminal dates, at the utmost, beyond a few years from the era in which we live" (54).

After Emily accepted Brethren principles, she read the work of B.W. Newton<sup>14</sup>, the leader of the assembly at Plymouth who later became Darby's enemy (thus creating the split between the Open Brethren and the Darbyites). Philip recounts:

At one time, while living at Plymouth, in endeared intimacy with the first wife of Mr. B.W. Newton, she was captivated by the beautiful and elaborate system and bold assertions of that eminent teacher. But even then . . . she frequently urged cogent objections in private to what appeared inconsistent; and her copy of that writer's "Thoughts on the Apocalypse" has its margins well studded with animadversions, criticisms, and objections, in her handwriting (A Memorial 55).

Newton's close associate, Soltau, also created "beautiful and elaborate" exegeses of the Bible, the word "beautiful" suggesting that Philip Gosse, in contrast to his son, appreciated the aesthetic dimension of typology and allegory.

Emily also read Darby's response to Thoughts on the Apocalypse, a work called the "Examination". Philip continues:

On this work, and especially on the "Notes on the Book of Revelation," by the same author, my beloved set a very high value; and her copies of both, like that of the "Thoughts" of Mr. Newton, are filled with marginal notes in pencil, that prove how well she had studied them (A Memorial 56).

Emily's study of the scriptures receives added depth and breadth when accompanied by the Biblical, particularly the prophetic, commentaries of the Brethren. We have seen how their methods were more "literary" and figurative than Edmund admitted. The typological and tropological methods of the Brethren were assimilated by the elder Gosses, but we also find Emily employing these methods in her 1835 journal, six years before she joined the Brethren (demonstrating that the Brethren did not have a monopoly on typology).

#### IV.i. The Typological and Tropological Roots of Victorian Autobiography.

In The Law of the Offerings, Jukes suggests that the purpose of typology is essentially pragmatic. It should increase spiritual knowledge and improve the believer's walk with Christ: "Know more of Exodus, that is, of redemption . . . and then see if you have not something more to use in service for Him who redeemed and loved you" (32). Know more of Exodus and you also know more about the tradition of English Puritan autobiography that more or less began with Bunyan. As Linda Peterson argues in Victorian Autobiography (1986), this tradition arose out of typological and tropological readings of the Bible, and of Exodus in particular (35). Typology and tropology encourage the autobiographer to connect his or her life to that of Biblical characters, especially the Israelites. Peterson explains further:

From Bunyan's era to Ruskin's, the spiritual autobiography demanded an intense introspection and

retrospection of the writer's life and a rigorous interpretation of his experience in terms of biblical texts or patterns of biblical history (1).

Autobiography as a genre "depended upon--perhaps originated in--a particular system of biblical hermeneutics known as typology" (Peterson 6).

The autobiographer appropriated Biblical types for individual use, and they became a means by which he could illustrate certain aspects of his character and experience. The author's spirituality was measured against the examples (good or bad) set by a cast of Biblical characters. Under the theological rubric of Calvinism, a tropological comparison with Biblical characters could offer clues to a believer's salvation or damnation. Spiritual autobiography, after the tradition of Bunyan, became a means of systematically exploring the condition of one's soul. This inner pilgrimage was facilitated by a hermeneutic method which allowed you to read the stories of characters like Samuel, David, Job, or Christ as if they were your own stories. More ominously, if you saw Cain, Esau, or Judas in the mirror your damnation seemed certain.

Yet if the genre of autobiography follows Biblical patterns of typology and tropology, the formula may be read in reverse: parts of the Bible are written according to autobiographical principles and demands. Bunyan justified the publication of Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (1666), perhaps the classic Puritan autobiography, for this very reason. The Biblical texts which support his personal justification are Numbers 33:1-2 and Deuteronomy 8:2,3,

passages which Bunyan quotes (as Peterson notes) in the preface to Grace Abounding:

Moses (Numbers. 33. I, 2) writ of the Journeyings of the children of Israel, from Egypt to the Land of Canaan; and commanded also, that they did remember their forty years travel in the wilderness. Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no, Deut. 8.2,3. Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not onely so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their Souls, by reading his work upon me (Bunyan 2).

Bunyan then urges upon his readers the notion that "It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of Grace with their Souls" (2). Peterson observes that:

Bunyan's choice of scriptural texts . . . had profound effect upon the tradition of spiritual autobiography that followed from Grace Abounding. It linked the form of autobiography to the Book of Exodus--both narratively . . . and also hermeneutically (35).

What gives autobiography its "scriptural" potential is the realization that Moses was also writing an autobiographical narrative when he wrote Exodus. Moses' record becomes a type in relation to the autobiography as antitype. Autobiographers like Bunyan reckoned that if published scripture was legitimate for Moses it was also legitimate for them. Moses' precedent gave later autobiographers the freedom to write pseudo-scriptural accounts of their own.

#### IV.ii. Classification of the "Recollections".

Like her literary ancestor, Bunyan, Emily Gosse found typology and tropology to be legitimate tools for autobiographical art. Emily's tropological incorporation of the Exodus narrative into her own life story is what serves as a catalyst for her 1835 "Recollections". Despite its short length of thirty pages, certain aspects of the "Recollections" are strikingly similar to Grace Abounding. Like Bunyan, Emily was "convicted" with a sense of her own sinfulness, and she hoped that religious introspection would provide clues to the "beginnings of grace in her soul" (although these are not her exact words).

Both Grace Abounding and the "Recollections" perceive the relationship between self-reflection, tropology, and salvation, although Bunyan more obviously uses autobiography to help provide narrative assurance that he is not damned. Bunyan and Emily share fundamental typological commitments, as well as the specific tropological connection between self and the Israelites<sup>15</sup>.

The "Recollections" are not as long as Bunyan and St. Augustine's confessions (the latter is the fourth-century pioneer of autobiography), and thus Emily does not have narrative space to develop a conversion story with a definite beginning, conversion climax, and conclusion. Nevertheless, the 1835 journal, as a literary work, does not lack organisational structure, which she borrows from a preacher's sermon<sup>16</sup>. The "Recollections" were never published and they do not provide a full life history, but

that should not disqualify them from being classified as a short conversion narrative. Emily does tell a story about her religious history and she reaches conclusions about her sinful nature which are similar to those of Paul, Augustine, and Bunyan. Emily's 1835 journal belongs to the genre of Puritan autobiography because of its comparable theological and typological motivations, narrative structure, and confessional content.

#### IV.iii. Typology and Tropology in the "Recollections".

Although Emily was not a member of the Plymouth Brethren at the time of writing the "Recollections", she shared their attitudes towards the scripture from an early age. She recollects:

I think I have always had a love for the Bible . . .  
I was considered at school a good Bible scholar, and  
we read the lessons and psalms daily, by which I  
learned nearly all the latter by heart, and can  
repeat them still ("Recollections" 24).

This openness to scriptural internalization is necessary for tropology and it constitutes what Emily's son tried to protect himself against in his own religious education. Sharing the Brethren's commitment to intense and heartfelt Bible study, Emily was preconditioned for the typological and tropological practices she embraced when she joined the Brethren six years after she wrote her autobiography. The centrality of typology is even more apparent in Abraham and His Children (1855), the subject of the next chapter.

If Emily's 1835 journal was less public about its typology than Abraham and His Children, it was nevertheless

equally committed to the typological method of reading the Bible. The "Recollections" begin with exactly the same passage from Deuteronomy that Bunyan quotes in the preface to Grace Abounding:

Thou shall remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee and to prove thee to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no (Deut. 8:2).

The relationship between Grace Abounding and the "Recollections" is itself a doubly typological one, with Emily imitating both Bunyan and scripture. The two autobiographies are related in the same way that Father and Son is to the "Recollections". Like it or not, the literary tradition which fostered Edmund's autobiographical art was inspired by the very methods of reading the Scripture which he defined as sterile and unimaginative.

The passage from Deuteronomy which Emily quotes serves as a text which allows her to locate her own experience in a Biblical "wilderness". Tropological activity is exemplified in the way in which Emily applies Deuteronomy to her life in the "Recollections". By projecting herself into the psychological landscape of the Hebrew Bible, Emily in effect turns herself into an antitype in relationship to the Israelite types. Tropology takes typological relationships out of context and applies them directly to the self. By comparing the Israelite's experience in the "wasteland" to her own, Emily's sense of her ancestry and memory no longer includes that of her own generation only, but also the collective experience of a community that lived over two



thousand years earlier (thus forcing a Christian genealogy on the Hebrew tribes).

The comparison between self and Israelites also places the author of the "Recollections" squarely within the seventeenth-century autobiographical tradition. This tradition encourages the "literary" practice of interpreting one's life according to the narrative framework and plot of Exodus. The retrospective reflection that is demanded by the words "thou shall remember" requires a leap of faith on the part of believers like Bunyan and Emily. This creative leap is what enables a Biblical reader to travel through time and through differing narrative contexts, linking one's literary and temporal history to "chosen" ancestors in the Hebrew Bible.

Tropology, if taken literally, does not allow the historical and cultural differences between ancient Israelite and English Victorian to diminish the former's moral relevance to the latter's lives. It closes the gap between the two and constructs a metaphorical bridge which yokes past and present into a false unity. Peterson contends that Puritan congregations had been conditioned for this kind of thinking since the seventeenth century, with typological and allegorical methods continuing into the nineteenth (22-23). It was morally valid, relevant, and even imperative for "every Christian believer, clergyman and layman alike, to apply his understanding of the Scriptures to his own life" (Peterson 23). With this ecclesiastical encouragement, all that was needed was a willingness to let Biblical types and stories be powerful enough to define the

meaning of your life--a sacrifice of individuality which Edmund Gosse was unwilling to perform. Tropology becomes a means whereby an autobiographer like Edmund's mother can "discover design in [her] life by appropriating the patterns of biblical history" (Peterson 14).

The Puritan literary tradition's dependence on scripture, combined with the way the Bible invites the reader to remember God's plotting activities in her own life, is what helps to arouse the autobiographical impulse, particularly in Emily's case. Tropology is the act of reading the Bible autobiographically, as if it were part of one's own family history; this is the way Philip Gosse read the scriptures (F&S 224). Like her future husband, Emily read Deuteronomy as if it contained a message just for her. Thus, in a sense, her autobiography becomes a nineteenth-century midrash or re-write of Deuteronomy 8:2--scripture generating more proto-scriptural texts. Here, Protestants and Puritans borrow from Judaic tradition and the distinction between reading, writing, and living the Bible becomes blurred. This re-writing of scripture parallels what Edmund does in Father and Son. As in the "Recollections", Edmund's autobiography both depends upon the scriptures and manipulates them (meanwhile depending upon the "Recollections" as well).

#### IV.iv. The "Recollections".

Read tropologically, the wilderness of Deuteronomy represents Emily's twenty-nine year sojourn in the world and her "Recollections" propose to "examine her past life" according to a five-part structural pattern that she borrows from a preacher. This examination is somehow necessary and imperative. The five spiritual categories that she is to meditate upon include: her religious development, afflictions, mercies, sins, and God's providence. In the long sentence which follows the Deuteronomy passage, she explains why it is necessary to take an inventory of her soul:

A sermon on these words having enforced the necessity of a frequent and minute enquiry into our past lives, I have put down the foregoing short notes of my past years to aid my memory; and a temporary and slight indisposition affording me a little leisure I propose considering and noting down some of my recollections--may the holy spirit enlighten my understanding and memory; may he give me judgement and discretion and above all a perfect candour and sincerity in all I say, and may he enable me to judge rightly concerning his dispensations ("Recollections" 11)<sup>17</sup>.

The "Recollections" show true Puritan spirit, in that the sermon on Deuteronomy is what initiates a series of reflections which in turn provoke a conviction of sin that reveals to the autobiographer her essential worthlessness. In fact, it is Emily's insufficient recognition of her depravity which troubles her:

1st the sermon bids us enquire by what means we were brought into this way?-- This is impossible to answer as I cannot recollect the time when I did not love religion. I believe my mother instilled some of its first truths into my heart in my very infancy, and I always loved the Lord's book and day and worship since I can remember anything. The great and worst

defect in my religious education was that I was never fully impressed with the utter depravity and helplessness of my nature, with the efficacy of the Atonement, of the new birth, and the work of the Spirit ("Recollections" 12).

From this passage it can be seen that Emily's religious history parallels that of her son's to an uncanny degree. As with him, religion was instilled "in my very infancy" and at an early age she maintains some doubts about her religious indoctrination. Mrs. Bowes, with her predisposition towards the Chapel, might have been the one who stressed the reality of original sin and the central Evangelical tenet of the atonement. Moreover, Emily's governess, Miss Shore, was a Calvinist. Yet Emily, as a child anyway, was not "fully impressed" with her wickedness, just as Edmund was unimpressed with God's talent for spectacular punishment after he worshipped a chair and nothing happened (F&S 67).

Emily continues the passage quoted above with an explanation of the unstable nature of her conversion:

Therefore with an inclination to hear of God, a desire of seeing him obeyed by others and of serving him myself, I never attained anything like a pure conscience, or a consistent walk; I had not motives strong enough to wean me from sin, and self-indulgence, and yet, I was never hardened enough to sin without fear, and remorse, and repentance. This weakness was increased by my idle irregular education, and the great indulgence of my mother. Therefore if I must date my conversion from my first wish and trial to be holy, I may go back to my infancy, if I am to postpone it till after my last wilful sin, it is scarcely yet begun (12-13).

The last four lines from this extract were quoted by Edmund Gosse in the opening pages of Father and Son, offering an early contrast of conversion experiences--the mother's desire for holiness and the son's desire to escape

the enforced holiness of his infancy<sup>18</sup>. Typology is in operation in Edmund's autobiography, in that he incorporates the text of the "Recollections" into his own, something which allows him to juxtapose the mother "covenant" with the son covenant, Emily providing the type which the Edmund fulfils as apostate antitype.

The second and third spiritual concerns which the sermon bids Emily to consider are her afflictions and mercies. The former include a few minor illnesses, some "depression of spirits", a shortage of religious friends, and her family's poverty after her father exercised his wealth-dispersing capacities ("Recollections" 13). What Emily concludes about her mercies is that they are "innumerable"--and they include near escapes from death and the mercy of "being kept out of the world" (14). Yet she gives the impression that God has let her down by failing to impose the cross of Christian affliction upon her. This neglect is redressed in an 1836 entry in which Emily describes how sickness and pain "gently corrected me, and brought me nearer to thee"--sad types of her final sufferings twenty years later. Related to the third section, though assigned to the fifth is "God's providence", for which she is grateful for her education, her parent's virtuous example, and an annuity of £25 ("Recollections" 20-21).

#### IV.v. The Sin of Storytelling.

Now we have reached the heart of Emily's "Recollections", where she settles down to the serious business of confessing her sins. Of the five sections, the one devoted to sins is by far the longest. The number of sins seems so vast that Emily does not know where to start listing them. She follows the heading "4th our sins" with the words: "But how shall I begin? Where end? How shall I even find them out?" (16). Here, she sounds like the penitent Augustine, who asks similar questions at the beginning of book nine of the Confessions:

What evil have I not done? Or if there is evil that I have not done, what evil is there that I have not spoken? If there is any that I have not spoken, what evil is there that I have not willed to do? (181).

In Emily's case as well as Augustine's, the attempt to magnify somewhat unremarkable sins constitutes an effort to cast one's self into the role of the prodigal sinner<sup>19</sup>.

Here are Emily's sins: story-telling, unbelief, selfishness, sneaking food from the kitchen, dissembling because of surprise or pride, and concealing her opinions while pretending to agree with friends and family ("Recollections" 16-19)<sup>20</sup>. She has also spoken bitterly about other people's faults and enjoyed hearing others do the same. Emily seems to be scraping the barrel here, as if she is exaggerating her sins to provoke grace. But the competition to be the most enthusiastic and versatile of sinners can lead to spiritual (and artistic) pride. After all, what is more enjoyable than good presentations of sin?

Emily herself admits: "I have also taken a wicked pleasure in reading of wickedness" ("Recollections" 19).

The sense of Emily's own sinfulness is ever-present in the narrative of the "Recollections", but it makes a doubly self-reflective turn and focusses on the process of writing itself. The following passage, which describes Emily's early imaginative life, is also quoted in Father and Son (49)<sup>21</sup>:

When a very little child I used to amuse myself and my brother with inventing stories, such as I read. Having as I suppose naturally a restless mind, and busy imagination, this soon became the chief pleasure of my life: unfortunately my brothers were always fond of encouraging this propensity, and . . . I found in Taylor the maid a still greater tempter, but still perhaps there was little harm in it till Miss Shore finding it out lectured me severely, and told me it was wicked. From that time I considered it a sin, and often repented and confessed it, but it was too deeply rooted in my affections to be resisted in my own strength, and unfortunately I knew neither my corruption nor my weakness, nor did I know where to gain strength ("Recollections" 16-17).

Edmund Gosse claimed in Father and Son that his parents lacked imagination, but Emily's problem was that she had too much imagination; it seemed to have a "restless" life of its own. Emily saw the connection between reading stories and inventing them, and her own experience with this process might have been the source of the ban she placed upon fiction. That Edmund resented this prohibition is recorded in Father and Son (50), and it aroused in him a longing to commit the sin of storytelling. Yet the Biblical stories, "such as he read", became the inspiration for Edmund's own versions of these stories--thus reaffirming the connection between close reading and re-writing, as well as the subversive potential of literary imitation.

Emily describes the sin of story-telling as if it were a private manifestation of original sin. Her mind is "naturally" restless, the sin is "deeply rooted", and she is weak and corrupt (with a fatal lack of free will). "Corruption" is a strong word to describe the spiritual condition of a nine year- old girl, especially as it seems to suggest carnal corruption--storytelling as a type of erotic sin that she commits at her brothers' behest. But it took awhile for Emily to understand just how corrupt she was. The sense of fiction's wickedness

gradually dawned on me, very slowly and very feebly have I attained to the light of true Christianity; meanwhile these habits never eradicated have grown more inveterate. Everything I heard or read became food for my distemper, and the folly, vanity, and wickedness which have disgraced and polluted my heart are more than I am able to express. Even now, tho' watched, prayed, and striven against this is still the sin that most easily besets me. It has hindered my prayers, prevented my improvement in human as well as divine knowledge. It has made me to know more of the depths of sin than I could ever otherwise have believed, and therefore I hope has humbled me very much ("Recollections" 17).

The sin of storytelling has made her more sympathetic towards other sinners, for even though they may have been more "openly wicked", she may nevertheless be "worse in the eyes of God". But there are spiritual compensations: "it teaches me the desperate wickedness of my heart, and makes me thereby understand the scriptures, and the need of a Saviour" (18). The sin of story-telling precipitated Emily's fortunate fall; she did not know she was wicked and needed saving until she realized how corrupt she was. It also engenders a fortunate fall into writing--the sinner tells an autobiographical story in order to confess the sin



of storytelling. Emily seems to take pride in how wickedly imaginative she was as a child.

Does the sin of story-telling include the "sin" of autobiography? The claim that writing the "truth" about one's depravity is a theologically and morally legitimate exercise could be just another way of circumventing the prohibition against fiction. Bible stories are meant to be different. They tell truths that can be applied to one's life story and they present "ideal" characters that are supposed to be imitated. In this sense, autobiography makes a virtue out of a necessity; you have to tell your story and a text like Deuteronomy or Grace Abounding provides an legitimate form of expression.

Yet autobiographical expression can easily fall into the realm of fiction. The sin of story-telling can be another name for the art of lying. This particular sin became the ruling demon in the Gosse family, tormenting Emily with its temptations and taunting Edmund with his possible inability to commit it imaginatively and successfully. The irony is that Emily's method of avoiding the sin of fiction was as creative as her son's enthusiastic attempts to embrace it. The story of her "fall" is as affecting and dramatic as Edmund's deconversion story, and perhaps more convincing.

Paul Korshin, who contributed a chapter entitled "The Development of Abstracted Typology in England, 1650-1820" to Literary Uses of Typology (1977), explains some of the cultural and historical developments which allowed typology to become secularized, applied out of Biblical context, and potentially "fictionalized". By the latter half of the

seventeenth-century, "typology becomes attractive to the practitioners of other literary genres, especially to satirists, character writers, the authors of prose and verse fables, and, perhaps most important, the writers of prose narrative" (Korshin 158)<sup>22</sup>. Korshin names Bunyan as a pioneer in

encouraging abstracted typology in fiction, and for one very persuasive reason: his complex typologies are highly appropriate to the requirements of the novel; they are invented scenes and little predictive dramas, Christian and biblical in their subject but original in their presentation (160).

The "Recollections" could also be a partner in crime with the author of The Pilgrim's Progress. Emily, too, is guilty of appropriating biblical stories for literary purposes, and her son covets this "literary" guilt.

Although Emily copies Bunyan when she uses the Deuteronomy passage as a starting point for her autobiography, the tropological thinking necessary to make this connection is essentially imaginative (just as Edmund's imitation of his father's sea-creature monographs is creative (F&S 147)). Emily constructs a story, a history of her life, which seems to take precedence over the Bible and merely use it as a justification or theological alibi. Even if the scriptures and the preacher serve as primary catalysts for her reflections, once they are engendered they seem to go their own way and refer only to themselves.

This freedom of movement away from the scriptures could be interpreted as allegorical rather than typological--making the Biblical text open up vertically to another realm of meaning rather than horizontally into a historical or

literal one. This process requires a grasp of the symbolic. Here, Emily could be showing her narrative potential, something which Edmund himself admits that she possessed, despite his generally negative comments about his parents' imaginative capabilities. In Father and Son, he laments the fact that Emily rejected her sinful calling:

This is, surely, a very painful instance of the repression of an instinct. There seems to have been, in this case, a vocation such as is rarely heard, and still less often wilfully disregarded and silenced. Was my Mother intended by nature to be a novelist? (49).

Emily never fulfilled her literary promise as a novelist, but in the "Recollections" and other writings, she did employ typology and tropology in a creative way. In effect, she invented new Biblical stories by re-writing the original scriptures in autobiographical and "fictional" terms<sup>23</sup>. The "sin" of autobiography becomes the art of lying. Paradoxically, Edmund's autobiography professes to be "scrupulously true" (33) yet it did not live up to this claim, while Emily, probably the more honest of the two, left the question of truth up to the Holy Spirit: "may he give me . . . a perfect candour and sincerity in all I say" (11). Edmund makes the same literal truth claims for himself that he accuses his parents of making when they read the Bible. Ostensibly the less "fictional" of the two autobiographies, the "Recollections" seem more willing to leave the question of truth open-ended.

I would argue that Emily's short autobiography provides a "scriptural" account of herself in the same way that Father and Son provides a more lengthy yet possibly less cohesive

and convincing "Gospel" of Edmund. In this way, the mother's text is itself a type in relation to the son's antitype, i.e. Father and Son fills out the prefigurative outline of the "Recollections", but at the same time gives the impression that Emily was more certain about her typological identity. Emily's narrative is "scriptural" in nature in that it takes scripture as its pretext and then fashions the story of a repentant sinner after the example of Paul, Augustine, or Bunyan--all the while using the language of the Bible. Yet Emily's autobiography is "fiction" in the sense that she creates a sinning character that is all her own.

The art of lying in the "Recollections" and Abraham and His Children is the art of creating a dramatic personal antitype which eclipses a Biblical type or types. Emily Gosse did not obviously suffer from delusions of grandeur, but as Sunday school teacher, writer of parables in the form of religious tracts, and suffering cancer-victim in Father and Son, A Memorial, and Tell Jesus!, she is transfigured into an antitype of Christ. His outcry against God became Emily's when her parents sometimes "forsook" her as a child, and she turned to a book called "Incitement to Early Piety" for comfort ("Recollections" 23). As a mature woman, she writes her own holy book and after her death she becomes the object of the "Biblical" writing of others, including her only son.

Edmund's attempts to escape his mother's incitements to early piety--which came in the form of the Samuel narrative--are what motivated the writing of a new Samuel story in

Father and Son. The stories which comforted Emily became a nightmare for Edmund, and in order to prevent them from writing on him he became the writer of his own Recollections, re-occupying the typological and narrative space that Emily claimed for him. Thus the son's impersonation of his mother becomes an attempt at "creative" parody. Yet the tradition which fostered the writing of the 1835 "Recollections" was not nearly so literal and narrow as Edmund claimed. In this sense, the pre-existing tradition of symbolic typology undermines Edmund's perception of himself as a poetic rebel; the "literariness" of Father and Son merely imitates the narrative practices of the Puritans he criticized for their insensitivity to literature. Moreover, it could be said that the "poetics" of the Puritan tradition rivalled his attempts to subvert that tradition through the secular and "poetic" use of typology.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lampe and Woollcombe contribute one essay each to Essays on Typology (1957).

<sup>2</sup> Philip Gosse believed that he would be caught up in the air to meet Jesus (Life of PHG 372).

<sup>3</sup> Thwaite points out an inaccuracy in Edmund's account of his father's religious history when he wrongly said that Philip joined the Brethren in 1847 (Thwaite 13). Proof of Edmund's mistake can be found in a letter dated 21 October, 1848 from Philip to his brother William. The letter describes the character of Emily Bowes, Philip's betrothed, and gives an account of how they met: "for the past seven or eight years [she has been] in communion with us who break bread simply at Hackney. . . . and mutual esteem has ripened into love" (document #29 pasted in CUL Rare Books' copy of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.). Possibly, it was mutual attraction which provided a strong motivation for Emily and Philip's membership in the Brethren.

<sup>4</sup> However, Rowdon provides an exception to this in the figure of Robert Gribble, a Brethren preacher who was "a man of lowly birth and occupation . . . who achieved in the country Districts of North Devon results comparable with those of . . . Newton, Darby, and others in the towns" (Rowdon 147).

<sup>5</sup> This being the case, perhaps Edmund's love of Lords in middle age can be traced to the aristocratic elements present in his parents' denomination.

<sup>6</sup> The word "apprehend" is reminiscent of the famous passage from Act V, scene one of A Midsummer Night's Dream: "Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,/Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend/More than cool reason ever comprehends./The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/Are of imagination all compact" (l. 4-8).

<sup>7</sup> Coad regrets Edmund's dislike of Jukes: "Edmund Gosse would surely have savoured the wit which the later Jukes showed in his personal correspondence" (Coad 79).

<sup>8</sup> The source for Emily's genealogy comes from a pedigree which her husband composed. The "Pedigree of Bowes of Boston (New England) North America" is now in the Cambridge University Library, Rare Books section. It is classified as document #24 among other papers and photographs that are pasted in the library's copy of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse.

<sup>9</sup> The pedigree is also the source for the names of Emily's sponsors: Mrs. Hippoley, Mrs. Elizabeth Fortescue, and Johnathan Elford, Esq<sup>r</sup>..

<sup>10</sup> Edmund attributes his mother's education to the "vanity" of her father, but a friend of Anna Shipton's quoted in Tell Jesus! (1863) writes that: "she [Emily] told me her mother was a peculiarly clever woman, and that they were chiefly indebted to her for their love of knowledge. She taught them the classics, and Emily herself was quite a scholar. Latin and Greek she was familiar with. . . ." (92). Edmund's claim that his mother disliked teaching is also contradicted by this anonymous friend (92).

<sup>11</sup> Yet, as a legacy of her childhood, a sense of insecurity and vulnerability remained: "Tho' I have striven and prayed against it, and never love it, I cannot yet trust to God as I ought the management of my temporal concerns. I am ever fearing poverty, destitution, starvation, even in the midst of friends and affluence" ("Recollections" 18).

<sup>12</sup> It is possible to speculate that Edmund reenacted Emily's role as servant to greatness when he became the House of Lords librarian after the turn of the century. He became infatuated with the titled and as a biographer he was a servant to famous literary figures.

<sup>13</sup> Emily was an experienced religious author, recounting in the "miscellaneous recollections" section of the "Recollections" that she used to write hymns in the garret and later burn them (23), and she was pleased when her brother Arthur "published" her hymns in private prayer (25). Emily as secret hymn-writer provides a type for Edmund as poet (she also wrote religious poetry).

<sup>14</sup> Edmund hated Newton's Thoughts on the Apocalypse, "which bore a great resemblance to my old aversion, Jukes", and he did not enjoy reading it to his mother on her sickbed in Pimlico (F&S 73).

<sup>15</sup> Yet a crucial difference between the two lies in publication status. Emily wrote her journal in private and did not try to lead any souls besides her own to Christ. But Bunyan's Grace Abounding is motivated by a desire to teach and edify--putting others "in remembrance of what he hath done for their Souls, by reading his work upon me" (Bunyan 2).

<sup>16</sup> This exonerates Emily from the charge of merely making discrete journal entries which bear little narrative relationship to each other.

<sup>17</sup> By writing a spiritual autobiography that was inspired by a sermon and written in imitation of its "plot", Emily resembles seventeenth-century autobiographers. Peterson writes: "Because the spiritual autobiographer borrowed his fundamental interpretive strategy from biblical typology, the account he produced often resembled--in its formal features--a sermon or a segment of biblical commentary" (Peterson 7). Puritan preachers presented passages from the scriptures to their congregations in order to impress upon them the moral relevance of the Bible and

the "necessity" of reflective self-criticism for their own salvation. This practice was present in nineteenth-century Evangelical circles as well, including Evangelicals in the Anglican church.

<sup>18</sup> It is also interesting to note the absence of the father in Emily's text; it is a story of an "indulgent" mother and a weak daughter, just as Father and Son offers a same-sex parallel in reverse, with its non-indulgent father and rebellious son. (However, the adult Emily was a very strong-willed figure).

<sup>19</sup> In the second book of the Confessions, Augustine provides an example of this with the story of stealing pears with his friends. Augustine judged the youthful escapade to be a great crime.

<sup>20</sup> According to Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape, this latter sin is one which Edmund was later accused of committing (Thwaite 15). It could be said that he inherited original sin, the sin of hypocrisy, and the sin of storytelling from his mother.

<sup>21</sup> Significantly, the passage is misquoted. Edmund even re-writes parts of it, embellishing it with his own style. Thus he simultaneously uses the passage typologically and subverts it through a process of fictionalization.

<sup>22</sup> In The Life and Letters of John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's (1899), Gosse examines Donne's role as a satirist. Gosse's own biographical portraits are often sharply satirical--perhaps another legacy of his typological training.

<sup>23</sup> As a child, Edmund tried to do the same thing when he invented new species to replace the sea-creatures his father portrayed in his scientific books (F&S 147).



## Chapter two: Abraham and His Children

The subject of this chapter is Emily Gosse's Abraham and His Children (1855), a book in which the influence of typology and tropology is strikingly present. Its subtitle, "Parental Duties Illustrated by Biblical Examples", immediately alerts the reader to these hermeneutic commitments. The heavily typological emphasis of Abraham and His Children could be attributed to greater exposure to Brethren typology than Emily had experienced when she wrote her 1835 "Recollections". By 1855, she had been part of the Brethren community for fourteen years, and a wife and mother for seven and six years respectively.

In The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S., Edmund describes Abraham and His Children as "the most ambitious work which Emily Gosse had hitherto produced" (256). The latter is certainly more ambitious than the "Recollections", in that its arguments and commentary are expanded to fill an entire book, not to mention the significant fact of its publication. However, the word "ambitious" could suggest a more negative meaning, i.e. that Edmund believed it to be ambitious beyond the author's capabilities. Abraham and His Children also articulates an official version of the ambitions which Emily cherished as a Christian mother, personal ambitions which were revealed when she dedicated her son to the Lord and attempted to raise him up to be "another infant Samuel".

The Brethren's allegorical practices and the typology of the "Recollections" have been assessed against Edmund's

aesthetic censure of the Puritan tradition. In a similar vein, Emily's educational manual provides a means for evaluating Edmund's criticisms of his own religious education, mainly because Abraham and His Children can be read as a written manifesto of what Emily tried to put into practice when she dedicated her son to the Lord. We have looked at the imaginative potential inherent in typology as exemplified in Brethren commentaries and the "Recollections", but we have not yet seen it at work tropologically on an individual child. The symbolic elements in typology are what make it such a self-defining power when used in a social context, partially because the very fact of typology's polyvalency leaves it vulnerable to being misused by individual practitioners. In this sense, Abraham and His Children's typology provides more than just a "literary" background for a comparative study of Father and Son. Its rhetoric was employed in the context of the struggle to teach Edmund to obey the theological authority of Philip and Emily.

What provided freedom of allegorical and typological interpretation for the mother became an oppressive intellectual burden for the son. An examination of Abraham and His Children provides support for Edmund's protests against the coerciveness of typology. The dark side of typology's imaginative freedom is its potential to be used violently by interpreters who want to create new Samuels, Isaacs, and Christs after their own fashion. Typological practitioners hence take "poetic" license with the objects of their interpretative designs. And this typological abuse

of power is one of the symptoms of "religion in a violent form" which Edmund wished to dissent from in Father and Son (248). Yet this is ironic in the sense that Edmund himself adopted the coercive authority of typology in his own biographical and autobiographical writings. Thus, Edmund criticizes typology for the wrong reasons--focussing on its perceived aesthetic defects and not its "political" ones.

The present chapter is concerned, first of all, to examine Emily's use of typology and tropology and demonstrate that it shares with Brethren hermeneutics a tendency towards allegory. Yet if the interpretation of types is "liberal", Emily shows a determination to apply types forcefully and unequivocally upon children. The second section of the chapter explains why she saw the imposition of types as a necessary spiritual safety-measure. Original sin and the confirmed wickedness of children makes the impersonation of Biblical characters all the more imperative; and this belief is what justifies authoritative and coercive religious education. Finally, Emily's exposition of the roles of Samuel and Hannah are examined, in order to better see how she put tropology and typology into practice in her own imitation of Hannah. Emily devotes an entire chapter to the Hannah and Samuel relationship in Abraham and His Children.

The chapters of Emily's 1855 book progress through the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures, seeking patriarchs and matriarchs who can provide guidance for Victorian parents. Emily moves from Abraham, to Isaac, Jacob, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, Jochebed, the Wife of Manoah, Micah and Jonathan,

Naomi and Ruth, Hannah, Eli and David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Manasseh, and finally to figures in the New Testament, such as Lois and Eunice. She returns to the Old Testament at the end of the book, holding up the example of Job as a model of the praying, interceding parent (a cue to which her husband later responds in the Epilogue to Father and Son). Thus Emily re-writes scripture from the point of view of a mother, telling the stories over again in order to draw out the lessons which the scriptures provide for the religious training of children. In her words, the ambition of Abraham and His Children is "to collect such lessons from the Sacred pages as seemed most obviously written there for our admonition and instruction" (239).

I.i. "Abraham and His Children" as "Proverbs" and Edmund Gosse's Protest against Them.

In a sense, Emily's 1855 narrative can be read as a collection of proverbs; it represents her best efforts to articulate conventional wisdom and advice, with a view towards edifying her Christian contemporaries. In the chapter on Solomon, she urges them to put the proverbs addressed to parents into practice, so that their instructions and "exhortations" will be "enforced by a continual reference to the words of inspiration!" (182). However, it is this coercive use of the Bible, as well as the belief in its power to come alive tropologically, which Edmund finds so problematic, especially as demonstrated in the way in which the precepts of Abraham and His Children

were "enforced" in his own childhood. Father and Son, both in its narrative contents and as a written text itself, serves as a reproach to his mother and a text like Abraham and His Children which seeks to force proverbs or typological stories on children. His rebellion also testifies to the fact that the ideals of his mother's educational manual failed to a certain extent. Typology perhaps works better as a "literary" device than a form of moral correction.

Yet Emily does not limit her proverbs completely to the Biblical tradition; she also borrows from the Romantic poets, whose influence in the early nineteenth-century was complemented in some respects by the rise of Evangelicalism, which adopted Romanticism's emphasis on inward, heartfelt emotion over outward rituals and forms. (The Romantic influence affected Philip Gosse to a great degree as well). In Emily's preface to Abraham and His Children, she recognizes the authority of Wordsworth, when she cites the famous phrase "the child is the father of the man" (iii). She believes that a child will become "just what we make him" (iii), if the right principles of Christian training are applied. According to Emily, a mother is like an architect; she is a soul artist whose converted child becomes the living incarnation of her "well-chosen and pre-determined plan" (iv-v). She resembles God in his role as an "artist" who predetermines His creation's destiny.

Emily has faith in the predictive truth of Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it". And she prefaces the

quotation with the significant words "if we" (A&C 30), thus locating spiritual responsibility even more firmly with the parent. This proverb becomes the refrain of her 1855 book; as if it were an incantation, it is repeated three times.

Yet Edmund begs to differ, questioning the inevitability of the evolution from trained child to trained adult; for him, the child does not necessarily father the man. In the autobiographer's case, the reverse may be true, because the man depicts the child in narrative form<sup>1</sup>. Edmund writes in Father and Son: "We are the victims of hallowed proverbs, and one of the most classic of these tells us that 'the child is the father of the man'. But in my case I cannot think that this was true" (216). Here, Edmund's autobiography provides a direct refutation of the refrain of Abraham and His Children. The former book describes how the author was victimized by the pedagogical philosophy inherent in Proverbs 22:6, a philosophy which was put into practice when the Samuel narrative was imposed on him. A study of Emily's typologically-illustrated guide to parenthood helps us to understand the force of her determination to create "another infant Samuel", as well as providing an illustration of the profound strength of the scriptural and parental expectations which "bound" and yoked her son.

I.ii. "Abraham and His Children" as "Scripture"--Typological and Tropological Elements.

Emily Gosse tried to interweave the story of Edmund's life into the narrative of Samuel, a writing process which Edmund tried to reverse in Father and Son. Her writing was so powerful and persuasive that Edmund was still struggling to overcome it half a century after her death. If Edmund's autobiography can be classified as "scriptural" in nature, how far could Abraham and His Children be perceived as a similar exercise in sacred writing? First of all, the justification for its publication is a didactic and typological one; Emily presents the reader with scriptural examples and stories which are meant to be applied personally in order to better train his or her child for heaven. She records a prayer in a diary entry dated February 21, 1855 which concerns the publication of Abraham and His Children:

Bless the parents and teachers who read my book. May it save souls. May it help to train little ones for thy service. . . . May it be favourably reviewed. May it soon come to a second Edition (1849-55 diary, Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

For Emily, story-telling, if based on "scriptural examples", is not considered sinful, especially if it is likely to "save souls". As prime story-teller of Abraham and His Children, Emily assumes the role of a writer of a wisdom book and in the process she sometimes adopts the character of Hannah, Abraham, or Eunice. Yet herein lies the potential for "blasphemy"; Emily re-writes and therefore

replaces the scriptures by assuming a "false" typological persona which disguises her personal writing ambitions.

Abraham and His Children can be read as imitation "scripture" in the sense that it provides typological commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures as well as encouraging a close identification with Biblical characters like Hannah and Samuel. Yet this identification is so intimate and all-knowing that it reaches the point of overshadowing these characters with an authorial voice that seeks to re-tell their stories on her own terms. Emily even feels free to speculate about the details of the Israelites' personal lives, as if they were part of her own family. For example, she wonders whether Moses' parents experienced some kind of revelation concerning the spiritual destiny of their son (A&C 117-118). Another midrashic speculation occurs in connection with the little coat Hannah made for Samuel to give to him when she visited Shiloh: "Perhaps it was the employment of her leisure during the whole intervening months from one visit to another" (162).

Tropology turns the most trivial of Biblical details into a lesson for the believer. Again, take the example of Samuel's little coat. Just as Hannah observed with pleasure the physical growth of her child and adjusted the coat according to his development, so "should the Christian mother look for the spiritual growth of the beloved child of her prayers. She ought not to be satisfied unless she beholds the signs of growth from time to time" (163). Emily employs tropology in a creative way here, uniting its two definitions: use of metaphors as well as moral application.



Her approach to Samuel's coat is metaphorical or allegorical in that it constructs a "higher", more universal meaning instead of seeking for a type of the coat in history (i.e. Christ has no corresponding little coat). She is interested in bringing out a hidden spiritual meaning instead of grounding that meaning within a historical, typological framework. In this she resembles theologians like Origen and Philo, who adopted a "quasi-Platonic" reading method which sought to discover the "eternal spiritual reality concealed . . . beneath the literal sense" (Lampe 30)<sup>2</sup>.

As noted in chapter one, a more contemporary theologian whose typological interpretations shaded into allegory was Andrew Jukes. In his Types of Genesis, he provides an allegorical analysis of the leading protagonists of Genesis:

there are seven very distinct forms of life, owned by God, which this book of Genesis fully reveals to us; first Adam, then Abel, then Noah, then Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, then at last Joseph (Preface xii).

Jukes reveals the meaning of these Biblical life forms:

Abraham being the life of faith, shewing how the man of faith goes forth, not knowing whither, yet seeking to go to Canaan; Isaac, revealing the life of sonship in the land, dwelling by wells of water . . . Jacob, the life of service . . . Joseph, the last, most perfect life, the life of suffering (Preface xiii).

Joseph is not so much a type of the historical Jesus as a symbol of the abstract idea of suffering. If Jukes and Emily Gosse are to be taken as representative of Brethren theology, and by extension the Puritan allegorical tradition after Bunyan, then Edmund errs in attributing to this tradition (as manifested in his parents) a narrow hermeneutic framework which is only concerned with literal,

historical truth. Edmund's resentment against the way in which his parents read his biography as a Biblical story becomes translated into a general condemnation of their method of reading the Bible.

Edmund himself seems to have imbibed a sense of the metaphorical and allegorical from his early childhood. As this entire thesis tries to demonstrate, the irony is that he owes what literary talent he possesses to his parents' allegorical readings of the scriptures. An entry in Emily's diary dated February 19, 1855, records the Jukeish interpretive activities of her six-year old son:

"Mamma I've been thinking of something. This world and heaven are like a house, and God and Christ are like the people to whom the house belongs. We are like the things in the house that want to be put to rights, and the wicked people are like the dust that must be swept away"

"Who told you that story Willy?"

"Nobody I thought of it. . . . You said when you were praying you hoped Christ would soon come and put us all to rights" (Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

Edmund's imitation of his mother's thinking shows an ability to see the connections between unlike to unlike--the essence of metaphorical chemistry. Metaphor links house-cleaning to salvation and finds multiple meanings in the phrase "put to rights". And imitation turns to originality when the story Edmund tells is one which "nobody" has told him.

If Abraham and His Children shares with The Pilgrim's Progress certain allegorical features, how far may it be classified as a work of "fiction"? It is possible to read the former book as a series of typologically-based short stories, all with a didactic purpose. If a mother is an architect, devising a blue-print for her child's salvation,

then, in this role, she resembles a species of creative biographer which her son describes in his 1901 article "The Custom of Biography". The architect and the biographer both see themselves as being entitled to exercise absolute control over their raw material. They reserve the right to construct, compose, and select according to their own predetermined "artistic" principles. Moreover, they take certain liberties with the objects of their creation which can be seen as exploitative.

In Abraham and His Children and Father and Son, Emily sometimes uses typology with a certain violence. Yet an examination of the etymology of the word "type" reveals that there is an element of violence within the typological system itself. Erich Auerbach's essay, "Figura" in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature provides a linguistic history of the word "type" or "figure". He explains that figura is roughly equivalent to the Greek typos, and that it does not derive its meaning solely from the Bible, but from philosophy and aesthetics. For Auerbach, the history of the word begins "with the Hellenization of Roman education in the last century B.C." (12). He explains: "Originally figura, from the same stem as ingere, figulus, fictor, and effigies, meant "plastic form"" (11). With the advent of Greek influence, it soon came to have a more abstract meaning. The Greek language possessed more words that meant "form" than Latin did and one of these was typos, which meant "imprint".

In a lexical study of typos in Essays on Typology, Woollcombe describes how

The word *τύπος* is the principal noun formed from the stem of *τύπτειν* 'to strike', and has the basic meaning in classical Greek of a 'blow' or the 'mark' left by a blow. It was therefore particularly suitable to signify the 'impression' made on wax by a seal, which is by far the commonest meaning, and that from which most of the others originate (Woollcombe 60-61).

The visual image of an impression made on wax implies a certain amount of passivity on the part of the type. A seal is something that by its nature is capable of repeating another form. Like a young child, it is malleable, receptive, and open to being manipulated over and over again to produce a certain shape. "Plastic form" describes it exactly.

Viewed from the psychological perspective of the power-imbalance between passivity and aggression, there are some disturbing elements in the etymology of typos, and by extension Emily's use of typology in Abraham and His Children. One element is the violence that its root verb suggests: "striking" and the marks left by a blow. It implies that whatever is receiving the impression is being bruised and marked without its consent. In the preface to Abraham and His Children, Emily declares: "We hold in our grasp the seal on which the soft, ductile, impressible wax of infant character is to be moulded" (iii-iv). This notion of the waxy passivity of the type could also reasonably describe the manner in which New Testament matrixes are forced upon the persons and events of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as how tropology forces Biblical stories on individuals.

There is a "family" relationship between type and antitype that is not always friendly. Auerbach writes:

The important transition from the form to its imitation, from model to copy, may best be noted in the passage dealing with the resemblance of children to their parents, the mixture of seeds, and heredity; with children who are . . . ("of both figurae"), resembling both father and mother, and who often reflect proavorum figuras ("the figurae of their ancestors"), and so on . . . (16).

Employing the combined concepts of the wax/seal metaphor and heredity, Emily looks to the example of Jochebed to legitimate her own typological program. Praising her power of faith, Emily declares: "And thus we must act, if we would have the impress of our faith stamped on the coming generation" (A&C 119).

Emily's appropriation of the role of "legitimate" typologist is essentially that of a creative writer who re-writes the Bible to prove a particular point. In this she resembles her son. Both authors use typology for their own ends, but nevertheless are dependent upon it and cannot conceive of a story outside the narrative framework of the Bible. Emily own typological practices are justified by her belief in the fallen nature of children; their natural degradation is what necessitates "marking" or "striking" them with types of their Biblical ancestors. Thus the typological imprint becomes a species of stamp or tattoo which brands the child as the Lord's property.

## II. Original Sin as a Justification for the Use of Typology and Tropology in Religious Education.

The symbolic freedom of typology as well as its potential for "violence" has been described, but what is it about the nature of children which justifies the superimposition of Biblical types over their names--as God's name was said over Samuel and Samuel's name was said over Edmund? Emily's overwhelming response to this question is to stress the determining power of original sin. The fallen nature of children is what necessitates a parent's typological and tropological activities. Because children possess no free will to choose good, it becomes the duty of a Christian mother to impose holiness on them. This imposition is accomplished by projecting them into the stories of virtuous Biblical characters, like Isaac or Samuel.

The spiritual necessity of raising up little Isaacs or Samuels is the urgent message which Abraham and His Children proclaims, and its theological principles--original sin and the necessity of grace--are what legitimize the "sin of storytelling" present in Emily's "sacred" handbook for parents. Here, the coerciveness of typology is an artist's right, in that it implies absolute authority over the raw material or clay that is the object of typological interpretation.

Yet parents are not exempted from original sin either, hence making the task of child-reformation seem all the more daunting because of the equal helplessness of parent and child. Emily declares that:

We have to learn our natural state, that we "were by nature children of wrath even as others:" He makes us feel our sin, our guilt and danger, our nothingness in ourselves, and our utter inability to save or help ourselves (A&C 214-215).

This recognition of humankind's fundamental guilt is something which Emily has already learned and internalized, on a personal level, in her spiritual autobiography. In the opening pages of the "Recollections", she chastises herself for not realizing how depraved and corrupt she was. Here, Abraham and His Children can be read as an incitement to tropologically-inspired introspection, with the author encouraging her readers to experience a conviction of sin and to imbibe the lessons of Biblical stories as an antidote to innate sinfulness<sup>3</sup>. Lest her readers be too confident in their ability to rest on their own ideas about child-rearing, she reminds them, with Augustinian fervour: "Indeed one needful part of our fitness is to feel our unfitness. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (A&C xvi).

To foster in a child's mind an awareness of his uncleanness and his absolute dependence on Christ to redeem him, the Christian parent cannot emphasize the doctrine of grace enough; nor is Emily afraid to mention hell (A&C 210). Nothing a child can do in the way of good works can help him on the road to salvation:

to be saved by their good works is their natural desire while they are whole-hearted; and to be lost because their sins are too great for forgiveness is Satan's usual lie when he sees the soul oppressed by the load of past transgressions (211).

An individual's sins or acts of holiness make no difference to God, something Emily once explained to her friend Anna Shipton, who was "slow . . . to recognize the utterly lost

state of the natural man" (Shipton 90). The remedy for "lost" natural man is "grace, free grace, grace abounding to the chief of sinners, grace equally needed by the most amiable and innocent as by the most vile and degraded" (A&C 211). The title of Bunyan's spiritual autobiography is also one of the premises of a theological program which justifies the imposition of typology on children.

Following the theological principles of Augustine and Calvin, Emily rejects the idea that children are innocent, quoting one Rev. Bridges as an authority on the subject. The Reverend asserts that all children "choose, from the first dawn of reason, the broad road of destruction" (A&C 194). He presents Christian mothers and fathers with the discouraging news that "Satan begins with the infant in arms" and "every vice commences in the nursery" (A&C 195).

Even though the odds are against them, parents should do everything in their power to reform the natural wickedness of their offspring. This is necessary if their hellish inheritance is not to overtake them. For Emily, "everlasting fire" is a reality and

This we must never forget is their birthright--they are "by nature children of wrath even as others;" to us is committed the responsible office of making known to them their state by nature, and endeavouring to arouse that principle of faith in Jesus which is inseparable from the new birth (A&C 159).

Again, the necessity of conversion is to be impressed upon the minds of small children--they will not realize the need to be saved and "converted" unless they know how deeply depraved they are by nature. Meanwhile, the parent must be forever on her guard against the wiles of Satan, as "the



unwary hearts of our little ones are ever ready to receive the evil seed" (A&C 240-41). Not only do Christian parents need to worry about the condition of their own souls, but also the possibility that Satan might be at work on their progeny as well.

Despite the fundamental problem of original sin, Emily emphasizes the parents' overwhelming responsibility for the spiritual fate of their children. A parent should be aware that he or she may not know "how far the Lord may account us guilty of their spiritual destruction" (A&C 80).

Furthermore:

that with which we are threatened, is . . . to hear it said of those we love and cherish, and for whom we would gladly lay down our lives; 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' (A&C 158-59).

To reinforce the crucial role a mother plays in catapulting the souls in her charge heavenwards, Emily introduces her readers to a preacher via a letter he addressed to a woman who has just given birth to her first son. The epistle does not waste time with congratulations but informs her without preliminaries:

you will probably be the chief instrument of his existing for ever in heaven's eternal sunshine, or in the deep caverns of eternal darkness. O that females did but consider how much is involved in the maternal character! (246).

A mother can never relax, because she must perform "[many] important duties . . . to train up the little immortal for Heaven's glory" (244). And does she realize that she will be the "source of exquisite joy in the world of bliss or of the bitterest and most heart-corroding sorrow in the world of woe, millions of ages hence"? He continues: "What a

solemn and momentous thought to carry with you, the next twenty years, if God should see fit to continue you both in life so long" (A&C 245). With so much pressure on mothers to secure their children's souls for heaven, the anxious imposition of holy types as means of achieving this goal seems more understandable.

### III. Edmund's Religious Education.

Emily herself took very seriously the duty of a Christian mother to nurture and admonish her child in order to better train him for heaven. If her typological impositions required sacrifices from Edmund, she underwent sacrifices herself for his sake. She writes in her diary on November 4, 1849: "I have made up my mind to give myself up to baby for the winter, and accept no invitations, to go when I can to the Sunday morning meetings, and to see my mother" (Brotherton Collection, Leeds). Edmund quotes this passage in the first chapter of his autobiography and comments:

She, however, who had been so much isolated, now made the care of her child an excuse for retiring still further into silence. . . . The monotony of her existence now became extreme, but she seems to have been happy (40).

Emily believed that a mother could not start teaching a child the lessons of salvation early enough. A letter dated 11 July 1853, dictated by Edmund to his mother when he was three, shows evidence of an early immersion in Biblical stories and poetry:

Mama told me a story of Jesus dying on the cross. I wish to see you again. Dear Papa I wish that somebody could preach to the people to make them good. I want you to come back and preach to the

people . . . I want you to come back and tell me that hymn, dear Papa, "I shall not 'ant" "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not 'ant" (Document #10b pasted in CUL Manuscript Room's copy of Charteris' The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse Vol. I (1931)).

His father's response to another early letter also suggests the all-pervading presence of Biblical stories in the Gosse household:

How kind it is of dear Mamma to tell you pretty stories about David and Solomon; God will make you wise and good too if you ask him, and try to do what he likes. I hope you will be more and more like Jesus whom you love to hear about, and whose sweet name you know when you see it, Jesus. (Undated letter, document #9b pasted in CUL Manuscript Room's copy of The Life and Letters of Sir EG Vol. I).

The tropological principle of imitation was taught to Edmund from an early age. Even as a toddler, Edmund is encouraged to imitate Christ, which suggests that Edmund's role as "infant Samuel" was meant to fulfil an even greater spiritual office'.

The tropological emphasis on "you" in relation to scripture is also emphasized in these early efforts train Edmund up in the nurture and admonition of the Bible. His spiritual education is intensely tropological and typological and is justified by the urgent need to transform him from child of wrath to child of grace, an eschatological imperative to which his mother devotes many pages of her typological parenting-handbook.

Anxiety over a child's damnation is what makes parents so desperate to secure the former's immortal welfare, so desperate that the "little immortal's" salvation is enforced (just as parental authority is enforced by the scriptures). Violent measures are necessary to make eternal life

possible, even though the parent should be conscious of his limited effectiveness in comparison to God's grace. Even physical violence may be justified as a means to a holy end.

Emily discusses the scriptural justification of corporal punishment in Abraham and His Children, where the "rod" becomes the physical manifestation of the "striking" inherent in the etymology of typology. Her authority is bolstered by Proverbs and the irrepressible Rev. Bridges, who flatly states that children are naturally degraded creatures: "all need the rod, some again and again" (A&C 194). Emily backs him up with citations from Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, and 29:15,17. These passages prove that "the rod has a very decided place in the Lord's system of nursery government" (A&C 188). The word "government" suggests the threat of force, a threat which is held over a nation's subjects to ensure their obedience (and implies their inability to govern themselves).

Yet Emily does not condone indiscriminate or gratuitous force, as she considers the rod to be a "corps de reserve". It should not be misused, but employed instead as a means of "assisting and enforcing good discipline when all other means are ineffectual" (A&C 191). Beatings with the rod are justified if they are judiciously used to subdue the will of a child and make him "feel that his parents are his masters" (191). Nevertheless, the private Emily seemed to feel even more ambivalent about corporal punishment. In a letter she wrote to her husband in the early 1850's, Emily tells him how their child has been behaving:

He is remarkably good as long as his will is not crossed, but I was obliged to whip him twice running,

which did not seem to check his love, he has been very loving, and full of kissings and huggings (Undated letter, document #8 pasted in CUL Manuscript Room's copy of The Life and Letters of Sir EG Vol. I). I).

Emily worries about completely breaking her son's spirit and thus losing his affection. Yet this emotional "weakness" is what she officially condemns in Abraham and His Children. Christian parents are failures when they punish their children insufficiently: "they shrank from breaking their wills, for fear of breaking their spirit, and losing their love" (34).

Father and Son provides evidence that the fears of "weak" parents are well-founded, when the author describes a very different response to his father's whipping than the one Emily records in her letter<sup>5</sup>:

It was about the date of my sixth birthday that I did something very naughty, some act of direct disobedience, for which my Father, after a solemn sermon, chastised me, sacrificially, by giving me several cuts with a cane. This action was justified, as everything he did was justified, by reference to Scripture--'Spare the rod and spoil the child'. . . . I cannot account for the flame of rage which it awakened in my bosom. . . . I have to confess with shame that I went about the house for some days with a murderous hatred of my Father locked within my bosom. . . . I do not regard physical punishment as a wise element in the education of proud and sensitive children (F&S 65).

Edmund uses Father and Son as a vehicle of protest against his childhood education, articulating a reproach that would have been impossible to express at age six. Silent, yet "murderous" hatred has been transformed into a literary anecdote.

In her capacity as author of Abraham and His Children, Emily disagrees with the mature conclusions of her son,

focussing on the important role that submission and subjection play in "nursery government". In Edmund's later role as ambitious poet and author of fiction, it could be said that he was trying to trade his role of subject child for masterful adult. When he was a child, he was the victim of a pedagogical philosophy which sought to "bend the tender twig", as Rev. Bridges phrased it (A&C 195). Emily openly states that it is best to begin breaking a child's spirit early, while it is more malleable. A mother or father should impose the identity of a Biblical character on a child before he has a chance to develop a strong sense of individuality. The trick is to begin as early as possible in order to prevent the fate of Eli, who did not restrain his sons:

A parent has it in his power to enforce obedience, when his children are young and weak. They cannot effectually resist him then; God has made them weak and small at first, so that they must submit if the parent enforces submission (A&C 166-67).

This cynical conception of a parent's role as disciplinarian is justified by scripture and the authority of preachers like Bridges. Yet one wonders if theology is "lying" here in order to cover up the darker moral implications of "bending the tender twig". For example, Emily describes the process of weaning a child away from rebellious tendencies in terms that resemble the language of torture. This process must be "like the continual dropping of water from the rock on the stone beneath, the effect of which, though imperceptible at first, in time wears away the almost impenetrable flint" (A&C 217). These precepts were put into practice in the education and rearing of her own

son, but through it all Edmund managed to retain a measure of inner "flint", partly because he learned how to lie and conceal its presence. His father continued to bring him up according to Emily's principles, but

Through thick and thin I clung to a hard nut of individuality, deep down in my childish nature. To the pressure from without I resigned everything else, my thoughts, my words, my anticipations, my assurances, but there was something which I never resigned, my innate and persistent self (F&S 168).

Despite all Emily's good intentions, this "hard nut" of inner integrity is what she sought to undermine and claim for God's service. But she did not take into account the possibility that "certain leading features in each human soul are inherent to it, and cannot be accounted for by suggestion or training" (F&S 55). Here, the writing of Father and Son could be read as the ultimate attempt to delegitimize the authority of Abraham and His Children. Edmund's 1907 autobiography denies the determining effect of training up the child to be the father of the man. Father and Son itself is evidence that he retained a measure of individuality, in that he could only write it after Abraham and His Children was no longer a powerful influence in his life (and thus no longer read seriously). Nevertheless, the very fact that he chose to write a spiritual autobiography suggests that he was forced to resort to the very Biblical and literary forms his mother cherished in order to undermine them from within.

The religious training which Edmund received was founded upon the scriptures and insisted that he internalize Biblical stories like those of Jesus, David, and Solomon--

stories which his parents told him from infancy. In Abraham and His Children, Emily finds a scriptural precedent for Biblically-based education in the example of Eunice (226), whose son Timothy, like Paul, learned the scriptures as a child. The typological authority for this method of early teaching comes from Deuteronomy 11:18-19:

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand. . . . And ye shall teach them [to] your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Emily obeyed the command to teach the word of God to her child "in season and out of season", putting Deuteronomy 11 into practice as she reinforced Edmund's dedication day by day. An entry in her diary dated December 13, 1854 allows a glimpse into her teaching methods:

Since I last wrote how many changes. Willy is now a great boy, able to read, learns a verse every morning but not willingly, and writes out a text with his printed letters. Is wild about animals, self-willed, often says what is not true (Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

(Edmund's parents called him Willy, after his middle name, William).

Some of the main tensions which are present in Father and Son can be detected in this early text: the unwillingness to swallow the scriptures, the learned ability to copy the Bible ("re-writing" it), and the propensity to lie. A more detailed discussion of Edmund's religious education will occur in chapter 6, but it is worth mentioning at this point the fact that Philip Gosse experienced a significant intellectual struggle with his son when he tried to make him memorize large sections of the Bible. That Edmund offered



"merely" passive resistance in the form of playing dumb did not make the conflict less profound.

#### IV.i. Tropology in "Abraham and His Children".

Emily's 1855 narrative helps to illuminate the tropological principles which became problematic for her son and made him want to resist the enforced imitation of Samuel that his parents, with scriptural approval, encouraged. Part of Edmund's predicament was that it became difficult to distinguish Biblical from familial expectations, as Emily's world-view was so profoundly influenced by the scriptures. She internalized the Hannah narrative so successfully that Hannah's desires for Samuel mirrored her own for Edmund. Emily's thinking was tropological at root, and her book on religious education illustrates her commitment to apply the scriptures morally and personally to Victorian parents. In turn, Abraham and His Children can be perceived as a version of family scripture and textual manifestation of the "yoke" which her son attempted to throw off in his own "scriptures", Father and Son.

As with the "Recollections", the fundamental underlying assumption of Abraham and His Children is the personal relevance of the Israelites to nineteenth-century Christians. This tropological application of typology can be illustrated in Emily's admonishment to her readers: "Let us not forget our true position and character as believers. We also are the Israel of God, dwelling in the midst of Egypt" (116). Like Bunyan, she provides justification (and

advertisement) for her book by merit of its potential to instruct and improve the reader. Her book might prevent family catastrophe:

Parents! if you would not be cursed with a Hophni or a Phineas, with an Absalom or an Adonijah, gird up the loins of your minds, and resolve, by God's grace, to rule your own houses well, having your children in subjection in all gravity (174-75).

In its exclamatory zeal and use of Biblical phrases (despite the puzzling image of a girded mind), Emily's language resembles that of a preacher. As a woman, she was denied the possibility of being called to the ministry, but Emily wrote religious tracts, witnessed to people on trains and buses, and composed her 1855 book in the style of an Evangelical sermon<sup>6</sup>.

Emily cannot conceptualize the failures and successes of parenthood outside of the Biblical framework; a bad parent produces an Absalom, a good one is rewarded with a Samuel. She never questions the appropriateness of Biblical stories to define the reproductive project. Her tropological vision is what places her on such intimate terms with the characters of the Bible, in that she has internalized the sacred stories to such an extent that she can regard them the same way she would her family or next door neighbor. By merit of the fact that she is so close to them, Emily feels confident about making personal judgements about the way the ancient matriarchs ran their families.

For example, Emily makes excuses for Rebekah's complicity in Jacob's blessing-crime: "Excuses may be made . . . for we must recollect that not only gospel light and morality were then unknown, but even the law of Moses had not yet been

promulgated" (82). She writes from an equally "Christian" and condescending perspective when she describes a family member to her cousin Sarah Stoddard in a letter dated 16 September, 1841:

I am sorry you should have been annoyed by anything my aunt Bowes wrote to you. She is one of those eccentric persons who require to have a great deal of allowance made for their conduct. She has always had her own way, all her life; as a child she was spoiled by her father. . . . You will not much wonder, therefore, that she was not very courteous to you, and will be still more inclined to make those Christian like excuses for her which you express in your letter. How can we tell what we ourselves might have been, had we been exposed to the same temptations, of flattery, prosperity, etc. (document #25 pasted in CUL Rare Books' copy of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse).

Both Rebekah and the curmudgeonly aunt require allowances to be made for them, considering that they did not have the advantages of Christian training in honesty and humility. Emily reveals her complacency concerning the superiority of the Christian dispensation, as well as her tropological ability to make no distinction between a contemporary aunt and an ancient Biblical mother.

The reader can almost see Emily's pursed lips and wagging finger when she chastises some of the more rowdy characters in the Hebrew Bible. For example, her conclusions about Jonathan the Levite are sharply remonstrative: "This young man was without excuse for wandering about in this manner, for his place as a Levite was to do the service of the sanctuary" (137). Unlike Rebekah, there does not seem to be any excuse for him. As for Moses' family: "We are not told of any reason why the descendants of Moses proved so degenerate" (139). Emily also imposes Victorian values on

Solomon, scolding him about his many wives: "One wife of wisdom and virtue would have stood him in more stead than all the host of idolatrous princesses with whom he filled his palace" (179). The author of Abraham and His Children seems personally disappointed when Biblical characters do not behave better. She gives the impression that she would not have let them get away with so much if she were their mother.

#### IV.ii. Tropological Application of I Samuel.

The tropological principle which allows Emily to project her disapproval into the pages of the Bible is also what makes her want to appropriate and internalize those scriptural examples she does sanction and admire. The story of Samuel is one which qualifies as material for Christian appropriation, as it exemplifies the ideals of maternal prayer and sacrifice. Emily draws from I Samuel in her parental manual in order to hold up the example of Hannah as the ideal Christian mother. That she took Hannah's example to heart in a personal context is evident from the testimony of her son, the proposed "infant Samuel".

Hannah was the barren wife of Elkanah, whose affliction was made more painful by the fact that his other wife was fertile. Hannah, "in bitterness of soul", went to the temple at Shiloh and:

prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore./And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and

there shall no razor come upon his head. I Sam.  
1:10-11. (Authorized Version).

Eli, the high priest at Shiloh, thought Hannah was drunk at first, because of her weeping, but it was only because she had "poured out [her] soul before the Lord" (I Sam. 1:15). The priest told her to "Go in peace" (1:17) and true to his blessing, the Lord remembered her prayer. Hannah conceived, gave birth to a son "and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord" (I Sam. 1:20). After he was weaned, she took him up to Shiloh to present to Eli, giving thanks to God:

For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord (I Sam. 1:27-28).

Abraham and His Children reads this story as an allegory for all parents: "we ought to consider every child given us by the Lord, as a charge committed to us by Him" (112). Christian children should emulate the fate of Samuel and fall under the category of lent child, lent, that is into the Lord's "service" (A&C 155). Emily practised what she preached and dedicated her own son to God, a metaphorical sacrifice which became the central typological pressure point that Edmund responded to in Father and Son. According to his mother's blueprint, he was born to assume Samuel's name, identity, and spiritual function.

Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg's I and II Samuel: A Commentary (1964) helps to flesh out the meaning of the Samuel type by explaining the etymology of Samuel's name. The word šēmū'ēl may be divided into two parts: šēm (name) and 'ēl (God).

Thus the name means: "he over whom the name of God has been said" (Hertzberg 25). Samuel's name is not solely his own; God's name is woven into the very arrangement of its letters and thus šēm is overshadowed by 'ēl. This makes for a double overshadowing in Edmund's case, as both God and Samuel's name are said over him. God violates the integrity of both names, invading the inner sanctity of the name Samuel and occupying it in order to prevent šēm from having an independent identity from 'ēl. Just as a parent reserves the right to say a typological name over her child, so God reserves the right to proclaim His Name over His priest.

Hertzberg explains some of the similarities between the etymology of Samuel and Saul, in effect arguing that they are almost the same name (providing another loss of identity for Samuel, whose story, in addition, is related to Samson's):

Twice in Eli's promise and most particularly in the naming of the child, the root šā'al, ask, is used in a kind of word-play. True, this is not far from the word šēmū'ēl, but it is without doubt more reminiscent of šā'ūl, 'he who is asked for' (25-26).

The verbs "ask" and "lend" become the object of the word-play in question, as the child donated to Eli when he is three is called šā'al: "'he who is asked' now becomes 'he who is lent', the Hebrew šā'ūl represents both" (28-29). In either case, the child is always the passive object of the asking or lending, and Edmund captures this spirit of inertia in Father and Son with the frequent use of the passive voice. For example: "In this strange household the advent of a child was not welcomed, but was borne with resignation" (F&S 38).

The child was so unwelcome that he was given away to the Lord. Yet he was not the only Victorian child who was thus dedicated. As Peterson notes in Victorian Autobiography (66), Ruskin also recalled:

My mother had, as she afterwards told me, solemnly "devoted me to God" before I was born; in imitation of Hannah. Very good women are remarkably apt to make away with their children prematurely, in this manner. (Praeterita (1949) 15).

#### IV.iii. Tropological Imitation of Hannah.

Emily Gosse and Ruskin's mother both saw themselves as Hannahs. This identification with a barren woman was intensified in Emily's case because of her age. She was almost forty-three when she gave birth to Edmund, making it understandable that she read her son's birth (and the survival of both parties) in miraculous terms. On the cusp of her menopausal years, Emily resembles aged mothers like Sarah and Elisabeth as well as other barren women in the Bible whose wombs God magically rejuvenates. The hymn of praise that Hannah sings after the birth of Samuel foreshadows Mary's Magnificat, therefore creating a further typological parallel between Samuel and Christ (and providing even higher spiritual ambitions for nineteenth-century Hannahs).

In the act of imitating the pious Hannah, Emily runs the risk of becoming a Madonna. In this she is encouraged by typology, which sees Samuel as a type of Christ and, by extension, Hannah as a type of Mary. Hertzberg observes:

Samuel unites in his person the three offices of the Christ who is to come, prophet, priest, and king. . . . The Bible regards him as being to a special degree one of the forerunners of Christ (43).

The typological parallel is further strengthened by a comparative study of Hannah's song and the Magnificat: "Hannah's song of praise . . . is extremely like the Magnificat (Luke I.46-58), which, while being in fact, simply a catena of Old Testament quotations, bears the closest resemblance to I Samuel 2" (Hertzberg 31).

After God answers Hannah's prayer and gives her a son, she weans him, takes him to Eli at Shiloh, and offers a song of joy (in addition to a slain bull): "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation" (1 Samuel 2:1). Emily echoes this battle cry in the diary she started after Edmund's birth, although her fight is not so much with a jealous second wife but with the child himself': "Our first battle seems likely to be as to whether he will lie down awake or be put to sleep in arms. May I persevere at proper and reasonable times in teaching him this lesson" (Nov. 4, 1849; diary in Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

Emily's song of motherhood was a song of pain and suffering. The struggle to give birth to Edmund left her wounded and weak, as an 1849 letter from Philip Gosse to his brother testifies: "I write in pain and weariness to say that my beloved Emily was safely delivered of a fine boy today at noon. She had a severe time and was delivered by the aid of instruments" (letter pasted in CUL Rare Books' copy of The Life of PHG). Edmund reinforces this testimony in Father and Son:

my Father told me that my Mother suffered much in giving birth to me, and that, uttering no cry, I



appeared to be dead. I was laid, with scant care, on another bed in the room, while all anxiety and attention were concentrated on my Mother (38).

Considering the difficulty of delivering a baby so late in life, especially in an era when infant and maternal mortality was so high, it is not difficult to see why Emily might perceive a divine hand in the proceedings (especially since she perceived God's presence in the minutest of everyday details).

The semi-miraculous nature of Edmund's birth and survival makes it all the more easy for his mother to compare herself to the miraculous mothers of the Bible. God's creative transformations of barren and virgin wombs seem to collapse the distinction between the two, a confusion which is reflected in some of the ancient texts which attribute the Magnificat to Elisabeth. Hertzberg explains:

Hannah's song of praise has been understood as the thanksgiving of a woman on whom God has bestowed the blessing of a child after a long period of waiting, and this in turn means that the reading of 'Elisabeth' for 'Mary' in Luke 1.46--with ancient testimony--is deserving of notice (31-32).

If Hannah is a type of Elisabeth, then the latter provides Emily Gosse with an example of an "aged" mother with whom she could identify tropologically. Yet middle-aged motherhood does not always seem to call for a joyful Magnificat. If God's power conflates elderly and virgin wombs, then another mixing of conceptual categories occurs in the association of sex, birth, and death--all present in Biblical stories about post-menopausal women who experience renewed fertility. And the reality of Victorian childbirth was that God gave children and took away mothers, something

which the Gosse family experienced when Emily died of breast cancer when her son was seven.

Abraham and His Children was published only two years before Emily's death, and is written with an acute awareness of the possibility of maternal mortality:

if circumstances which she cannot control force her to part with her child, if the hand of death is laid on herself, and she is obliged to leave him, whom she would gladly nurse for God herself, then in full confidence may she confide her nursling to her own Great High Priest, assured that He will watch over him by night and by day, and do for him better than she could have done for him herself (165).

Significantly, the foregoing passage is what concludes the chapter on Samuel and Hannah, thus suggesting a possible autobiographical element. Yet her death did not conclude the "chapter" on Edmund's dedication, as Philip continued to impose the Samuel expectation on him.

Although Emily claims that she would trust her child to Jesus' care if she died, Abraham and His Children often reads like the product of a desperate attempt to write against death. The possibility of her absence during the crucial years of temptation brings home the necessity of training her son intensely while still in this world. As she considers herself ultimately accountable for his salvation, Emily is unwilling to relinquish control over the training process. Unlike Monica, the mother of Augustine, she is not willing to let her son experience a good and sinful youth before he is finally reclaimed for Christianity. She wants to get him converted and baptized before he knows the corrupting influence of the world.

A Christian mother should strive to be as effective a Hannah as she can while she is still able. Emily characterizes Hannah as the pious mother who

dedicated her son to the Lord from his birth to the day of his death, and bequeathed to the nation a Deliverer, Prophet, Priest, and Governor./If we would have our children to become Samuels, to live and die in service of God, we must be Hannahs and Elkanahs ourselves (A&C 134-35).

Notice that contemporary parents are not merely to use Biblical parents as role models, but to be Hannahs and Elkanahs. Emily herself tried to live up to these tropological ideals.

Hannah's dedication of Samuel, imposed on him in the womb, resembles the dedication of Edmund, which he describes in the opening pages of Father and Son. He copies the dedicatory words from his mother's diary, but not with complete accuracy (as with the quotations from the "Recollections"). This diary, now in the Brotherton Collection, Leeds, is here quoted from the original:

Bringing him up by hand, we are continually told his food does not agree with him, but hitherto he has had nothing but milk and water, which he seems to enjoy, and he grows fast, without being fat. (Nov. 4, 1849).

The next paragraph continues with an account of Emily's dedication of her son, in effect offering God the unfatted Edmund:

We have given him to the Lord, and we trust He will early manifest him to be his own if he grow up, and if the Lord take him early we will not doubt that he is taken to Himself. Only if it please the Lord to take him I do trust we may be spared seeing him suffer in lingering illness, and much pain. But in this as in all things His will is better than what we can choose. Whether his life be prolonged or not it has already been a blessing to us, and to the saints--in leading us to much prayer, and bringing us into

varied need, and some trial (Nov. 4, 1849; Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

This is the passage which is incorporated into the narrative of Father and Son, and a comparison of the original text with the quotation reveals the fact that Edmund "cleaned up" his mother's hasty punctuation and altered a word here and there: really for early, suffering for suffer. Edmund is intrigued by the last sentence: "How, at that tender age, I contrived to be a blessing 'to the saints' may surprise others and puzzles myself" (F&S 40).

In Abraham and His Children, Emily asks "Christian parents!" if they are "anxious that your child should be born again?"--continuing the interrogation with a series of imperative questions:

Is it the one absorbing desire of your heart that he should be the Lord's? Do you imitate Hannah in her tears and prayers and longing for this one thing? Are your petitions brought into the sanctuary, and so presented as to be taken up and responded to by your great High Priest? (156-57).

Emily demands nothing less from her Christian readers than they be as single-minded and determined as Hannah. Edmund admits in Father and Son that his mother was a woman of rare "spiritual determinations" (39), and she expected the same from other believers. Emily finds Hannah's single-mindedness to be one of the features which qualify her for ideal motherhood:

She had but one object or aim; she asked a son of the Lord, she devoted him to the Lord, she brought him up for the Lord, she brought him early to the Lord's presence, and never resumed the gift which she had early devoted to the giver./Let us examine Hannah's history a little more closely, and examine ourselves by it (A&C 157-58).

Hannah's story is meant to inspire imitation and introspection, which are two tropological principles that underlie the inspiration of spiritual autobiography. Emily's tropological appropriation of I Samuel 1-2 provides insight into the kind of thinking which both predetermines Father and Son and creates an expectation which it tries to rebel against.

Considering Emily's steel will and determination to raise her son according to Hannah's principles, one wonders whether, if she had lived, Edmund might have become a preacher after all. She resembles Monica in her forceful prayers and desire to shape her son into a predetermined spiritual form. Emily herself compares Hannah to Monica:

If thou wouldst have, Christian mother, thy child a Samuel or an Augustine, be thyself a Hannah or a Monica. The child of thy prayers, of thy vows, and of thy tears, will be . . . the child; of thy praises, thy rejoicings, thy richest consolation (155).

Here, the author of Abraham and His Children seems to be praying to her readers; in her fervour, she adopts the "thous" and "thys" of the Authorized Version. Moreover, she imitates the parallelism and repetition that characterizes Hebrew poetry.

Emily employs the language of typology to reinforce the importance of the believing mother's imitation of Hannah:

Does not the Christian mother's heart glow with hope and joy, when she thinks of Hannah and Samuel, the very types of a happy mother and son: of early training resulting in early conversion, and the effects of early conversion continuing through a long life of active piety and useful service to God and his people?/ We can hardly begin earlier than Hannah began; who while as yet she had no promise of a child, dedicated the son she prayed for to Jehovah (154).

Emily then quotes the passage from Samuel 1:11, which was cited earlier--"she vowed a vow" etc.--thus bolstering her own words with the authority of scripture. She uses the Samuel passage typologically.

Emily's joyful thoughts about Hannah's story are what inspire her plan for the biography of Edmund. The statement about "early training resulting in early conversion" was prophetic in reference to the author's own son, as his baptism at the age of ten was the "central event" of his childhood (F&S 156). Edmund's baptism was the realization, at the hand of his father, of his mother's dedication. She imposed the plot sequence of I Samuel upon her son--training, conversion, useful service to the Lord--and it filled Edmund's heart with anything but "hope and joy". What was joyful to her became sorrowful for Edmund.

Emily realized that a child's dedication is not sealed in stone after the original prophetic words are spoken over him. As she explains to her readers:

Yet thy faith will not end with the dedication of thy child; Samuel was the son of his mother's vows, but also "his mother taught him;" and such is the practical habit of godliness, that faith in vowing quickens diligence in teaching. The child truly consecrated, will be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (155-56).

Infant Samuels need to be re-dedicated and nurtured daily, an educational process which includes a daily diet of the scriptures. After Emily's death, her husband continued to bring up Edmund according to her principles, following the script/scripture of her book on religious education. After Edmund tried to reject his dedication, Philip employed the words of Abraham and His Children typologically in a letter

addressed to his son. The letter is in turn cited in Father and Son as a textual embodiment of the heavy yoke of the Samuel type which continued to oppress Edmund well into early adulthood:

When your sainted Mother died, she not only tenderly committed you to God, but left you also as a solemn charge to me, to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That responsibility I have sought constantly to keep before me (F&S 249).

The repetition of "nurture and admonition" serves to further imprison Edmund into a typological framework which includes the scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer (Solemnization of Matrimony), and family scriptures in the form of Abraham and His Children and his mother's diaries.

The ideal Christian son, like Samuel, is one who is willingly sacrificed to the Lord. For Emily, the story of the sacrifice of Isaac serves to remind her readers of the kind of obedience they should expect from their offspring: "Let us ask every parent who reads this, Have you reason to think that your children would act thus under parallel circumstances?" (43). In Father and Son, Edmund tried to undermine this expectation of self-sacrifice to a Biblical type. He resented the heavy-handed application of the typological system, as well as his mother's role as typological storyteller of his future biography. In unconscious revenge, he wrote his own story, Father and Son, to counteract the powerful textual expectations of narratives like Abraham and His Children and the diary Emily wrote after his birth.

Yet Edmund and Emily are not alone in committing the "sin" of storytelling. The next chapter will explore the

dubious role of the biographer as applied to Philip Gosse and Anna Shipton, both of whom wrote memoirs about Emily. The book of Emily is thus created after her death, with her biographers distorting her own story through imposing on it the stories of suffering Biblical characters like Job and Christ. With the aid of typology, they exploit her just as she victimized her son by imposing Samuel's name on him. As biographical artists they take typological and "poetic" liberties with the story of her life, demonstrating that the imaginative power of typology can be misused for self-serving authorial ends.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (1890), Edmund becomes the father of the father.

<sup>2</sup> This passage is quoted more fully in chapter one. See section I.ii..

<sup>3</sup> Here, Emily's book resembles Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.

<sup>4</sup> The father's emphasis on the word "Jesus" is reminiscent of Jukes' definition of typology in The Law of the Offerings (11). The letters which spell Jesus are literally the ones which are used to teach Edmund to read.

<sup>5</sup> The differing responses to corporal punishment could be attributed to the gender of the beater. This might suggest an Oedipal complex that brings to mind Jean-Jacques Rousseau's pleasure in being beaten by Mlle Lambercier. He confesses to this "sin" in The Confessions:

when in the end I was beaten I found the experience less dreadful in fact than in anticipation; and the very strange thing was that this punishment increased my affection for the inflicter. . . . I had discovered in the shame and pain of the punishment an admixture of sensuality which had left me rather eager than otherwise for a repetition by the same hand. No doubt, there being some degree of precocious sexuality in all this, the same punishment at the hands of her brother would not have seemed pleasant at all (25-26).

<sup>6</sup> Emily grew up loving clergymen and her "Recollections" record how she fought with her brother over who got to read the clergyman's part in family prayer (27). Prevented by her gender from becoming a preacher herself, the next best thing was to raise her son to fulfil a role that was denied to her. Anna Shipton in Tell Jesus! believes that her friend had a real calling to the ministry, quoting from Philip's memoir a passage in which a female friend of Emily's describes a scene in the cancer treatment waiting room in Pimlico: "while waiting she spoke, as was her wont, to most of the those seated round the room" and after asking one sick individual about the condition of his soul, she walked a few paces from him, and then returning, solemnly said, 'There is but one way to be saved; the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' She added a few more words; but what affected and delighted me was, that in her fervour she no longer addressed that man in particular but there she stood as God's witness, and in tones that all in that room might, and I believe did, hear (although perhaps herself unconscious of it), proclaimed the blessed tidings of salvation (Shipton 64-65).

Here, Emily's solemn preaching is justifiable because it is done without premeditation. Yet her desire to preach was never openly articulated in any of her writings. (The word "solemn" is also used to describe Emily's attitude to Edmund's dedication in Father and Son (81)).

' Although she records in her journal how difficult it was to live in harmony with her mother-in-law, Hannah Gosse. She remained with Philip and Emily for a year after their marriage, but relations were uneasy:

She has not been happy with us, and feels much discontented with Henry's conduct from the time he was first engaged to me to the present time. She wished to be more with us, and felt lonely and neglected. She did not like her sitting room, she wanted company. . . . I was in hopes the birth of our child would (tend) to soften her, and heal the breach, but it is not so. I see no way we could have lived together that would have made her happy (Nov. 4, 1849; Diary in Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

### Chapter three: Memoirs of Emily Gosse

If typology may be used to interpret the experience of giving birth and raising children, it may also be used to construe the meaning of a believer's death. This being the case, the death of Emily Gosse in 1857 provided a type of the anxious dying mother portrayed in Abraham and His Children, inspiring her survivors to read her experience in Biblical terms. The history of Emily's illness and the events leading up to her death are recorded in two memoirs: A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse (1857) by Philip Henry Gosse and Tell Jesus! (1863) by Emily's friend Anna Shipton. The two memoirs share with the "Recollections" and Abraham and His Children an interest in reading the Bible typologically and tropologically. For Philip Gosse and Anna Shipton, typology and tropology offered an opportunity to create a Christ-like Emily in narrative form, as well as a chance to impose their own versions of a "Gossepel" on her. Thus they appropriated to themselves the license of an artist, imposing the types of Christ and Job on Emily in the same way that Emily imposed the Samuel type on her son. Thus, their memoirs exemplify the inspirational capacity of typology, as well as its potential to be abused.

The present chapter will serve as a bridge to link the early writings of Emily Gosse and contemporaries like Philip Gosse and Shipton with the "next generation" of biographies and autobiographies, written by Edmund Gosse. It will examine A Memorial and Tell Jesus!'s typological,

tropological, and "Biblical" elements, as well as discuss the implications of typological hermeneutics for biographical literature. This will set the scene for an investigation of Edmund's biography of his father, his other biographies, and Father and Son in chapters four, five, and six respectively.

To support the claim that Philip and Anna wrote "fictionalized" Gospels, I will look at their perception of Emily's imitation of Christ, as well as the memoirs' possibly blasphemous use of typology and tropology, particularly with reference to Emily's ministry and "passion". The word "blasphemous" in this context is meant to suggest the tendency to impersonate and transcend Biblical characters rather than merely imitate them.

The chapter will close with an examination of the fictional adaptations of typology and the potential abuse of power that the sin of writing a biography holds. For the biographers in question, the art of lying includes taking liberties with the story of another person's life. In Anna's case especially, the motivation for these biographical liberties is her love for Emily combined with a desire to write her own spiritual autobiography. Yet re-writing the scriptures becomes a means of imposing a story on a helpless protagonist--the biographer taking advantage of the freedom of interpretation which typology offers when she assumes the role of all-powerful author in relation to her subject. Here, Anna Shipton is the model for Edmund Gosse's attitude towards biography.

## I. Didactic Justifications for the Publication of Emily's Story.

In earlier chapters, we have seen how autobiographers like Bunyan and Emily Gosse are concerned to justify their writing projects and make them serve some legitimate theological purpose. The "Recollections" were "commissioned" by a preacher and sanctioned by Deuteronomy. Abraham and His Children relied on Biblical authority and scriptural examples to justify Emily's beliefs about Christian parenthood. Philip Gosse's Memorial and Shipton's Tell Jesus! are no exception. Both seek to cover themselves with a moral alibi which will exonerate them from the possible criticism of making literature (and profit) out of the story of someone else's suffering. They are biographers, but "pure" ones, only interested in edifying the reader by merit of Emily's devout example. Just as the story of Hannah was meant to inspire Christian mothers to dedicate their sons to the Lord, so the story of Emily is meant to encourage pious emulation on the part of the reader.

Tell Jesus!, first of all, presents the story of a saintly woman who serves as a spiritual role model, showing the reader how he could more consistently follow the straight and narrow path to heaven. The memoir is supposed to have the same effect on the reader as the reading of scripture<sup>1</sup>; the author of Tell Jesus! justifies the act of publication because her memoir of a godly Christiana might bring more sinners to Christ. Shipton joins hands with the

Bible, the life of Emily, and her own narrative in order to force upon the reader a tropological comparison between his life and the author's pious friend. She censors Emily's moral failings for fear of setting a bad example for Tell Jesus!'s readership.

Shipton mixes godly admonitions to the reader, Biblical quotations, her own poetry, personal anecdotes, and autobiographical detail with the frequently-interrupted narrative of the last years of Emily's life. The memoir section is 115 pages long and the rest of the volume contains Shipton's poems. Tell Jesus! borrows extensively from Philip Gosse's A Memorial, using it "typologically" in the sense that she incorporates the 1857 "Gossepel" into her own "Gossepel", altering the earlier scriptures in the process. Thus she imitates the narrative practices of some of the books of the New Testament, which borrow from the Hebrew Scriptures only to alter and transform their meaning.

A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse is written in a straightforward, often scientific style, which is in contrast to the almost hysterical zeal of Anna Shipton. Yet Philip Gosse is also concerned for the spiritual condition of his audience:

the Lord may possibly make use of this simple record of one of his servants, for the stirring up of the faith and love of those who knew her not, and thus to the extension of his own glory. For their benefit, then, I publish it (Preface iii).

Any spiritual profits derived from the reading of the memoir are intended for God and not the authors. Just as Bunyan encouraged other Christians to "be often calling to mind the very beginnings of Grace with their Souls" in the

preface to Grace Abounding (2), so also Philip Gosse's narrative is geared towards the spiritual benefit of its readers. Yet this is ironic in view of the fact that his readers were shocked and disgusted by the book's graphic descriptions of Emily's cancer treatment. Edmund Gosse records the response to A Memorial in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.: "This little book, which was addressed . . . to an extremely limited circle, was received with great displeasure by its readers" (273-74).

Philip's ostensible desire to edify his readers is also undermined by the way in which Emily eclipses the Lord as the main suffering protagonist of A Memorial. His priorities seem to be ill-disguised, in that the faith and love which is to be stirred up is for Emily first and foremost. The Lord and the reader take second and third place, the former being only an extension of Emily's glory, thus setting the tone for a "blasphemous" reification of Philip's wife and Anna's friend.

Tell Jesus! opens with a similar excuse for publication: "The blessing which has followed the narration of the simple incidents of the following pages induced me to commit them to the press" (2). One of the book's professed aims is to reach "the careless, the scoffer, the unsaved" (Shipton 111)<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, after she reproduces Emily's tombstone inscription on the concluding page of her narrative, she exhorts the reader to recognize the saving power of Jesus:

Sinner, He has died for you. . . . He saith unto you, "What wouldst thou that I should do unto thee?" Oh! TELL JESUS (111).

Anna supports her exhortations with Biblical authority. Passages from the Bible are woven into the narrative of Emily's life, serving to illustrate her theological beliefs as well as offer typological comparisons to situations and events that occurred in her life. However, as in the passage cited from Philip's preface, Emily seems to surpass the scriptures in significance; they achieve their importance because they fall from her lips or become personified in her life.

The scriptures' very meaning becomes dependent on Emily. For example, her trademark Bible passage is 1 John 1:7: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin". This is a text which she relies upon in her own ministry, and it is emphasized in Emily's tracts, such as "The Suicide", "The Two Maniacs", and, more indirectly in "The Consumptive Death-Bed". Moreover, A Memorial and Tell Jesus! record how the passage is echoed in some of Emily's final words. Yet the memoirs do not pretend to offer a general explication of 1 John 1:7, as its primary significance is to illustrate the consistency and attractive simplicity of Emily's ministry.

The scriptural justification for the Tell Jesus! concept, which Anna seems to credit Emily with formulating single-handedly, comes from Philippians 4:6 and James 1:5. The former verse tells us: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." James 1:5 provides further assurance that God will answer prayer requests: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to



all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him". Nothing is too trivial to pray for, and Emily served as a prayer-mentor in this respect to Shipton. She learned from Emily that Jesus was interested in hearing all requests--from supplications about matters of faith to orders for armchairs.

Just as an encounter with Jesus changed Paul for life, so Emily's personal witness deeply affected Anna, who confesses that she was "still groping in the twilight of spiritual dawn" when she first met her at Ilfracombe in 1855 (Shipton 12). And it is partly Anna's desire to keep her friend's ministry in motion which motivates the writing of Tell Jesus!. In this manner, the story of Emily's life becomes a "Gossepel" in its own right, extending its influence to Anna's friends (whom Anna says are comforted by Emily's words), and ultimately to the reader.

According to Anna, the words "Tell Jesus" sum up the essence of Emily's ministry. They testify not only to Emily's success in telling about Jesus, but her trusting ability to tell Jesus everything that troubles or gladdens her heart, no matter how trivial. After her first encounter with the quietly charismatic Emily, Anna read her life as one in whom God's love shone through more than most. Through her words, deeds, and friendship, Emily becomes a living text, almost able to effect salvation. She becomes Anna's saviour by merit of her quick sympathy and ability to persuade strangers to "Tell Emily" all that troubles them.

In the pages of Tell Jesus!, Emily becomes the living embodiment of texts like Philippians 4 and James 1. By

extension, Tell Jesus! itself is justified because it serves as an organ of propaganda for these scriptural passages. Emily's perfect faith in the relevance and efficacy of all prayers, no matter how "minute", is an outgrowth of an assumed intimacy with God and Biblical figures which her book Abraham and His Children illustrates. Anna's memoir tells how Emily put in to practice the Tell Jesus principle: "If I want a pin, and do not know where to find one, I do not lose any time in seeking for it. I ask Him to guide me to one, and He does so" (Shipton 27)<sup>3</sup>.

## II. Biographical Sketch of the Last Two Years of Emily Gosse's Life.

Before discussing the memoirs in more detail, the plot outline of the last few years of Emily's life bears summarizing. When Emily was diagnosed as having breast cancer in late April 1856, she and her husband consulted various specialists and decided to try a new American cure. Philip describes Dr. Jesse Weldon Fell's cure in A Memorial (Thwaite names the American doctor (30), but Philip only refers to him as Dr. F--):

he professed to be in possession of a secret medicament, by the external application of which to a cancer the diseased portion gradually became dead, spontaneously separated from the healthy flesh, and sloughed away, leaving a cavity, which soon healed, and the patient was well (6-7).

The prognosis was optimistic at first and the doctor assured them that "out of every 100 cases treated, not more than twenty instances occurred of a return or reappearance

of the disease" (A Memorial 8). Philip and his wife committed the decision to Christ and then agreed that the American cure was the right choice for Emily, mainly because her sensitive nervous system could not withstand the pain of sudden excision'. In Tell Jesus!, Anna further explains the reason for the decision. The new treatment

promised (how fallaciously we had yet to learn), if not a cure, at least a method preferable to immediate excision; as in case of failure in the first instance, the cancer would still be in the same position for--what appeared then the severer alternative--extraction (48-49).

They did not realize how painful Dr. Fell's treatment would be, mostly because they believed patients' testimony on the question of painfulness. Philip believes that in this "we were greatly deceived" (A Memorial 8).

Emily began her treatment on the twelfth of May, 1856, and Dr. Fell's method is described as follows:

He commenced by applying two or three kinds of ointment to the breast, using them alternately on successive days; and this mode of treatment was continued until the end of August. It involved the necessity of my beloved wife's going from Islington to Pimlico three times a-week--a wearisome task (A Memorial 13-14).

The month of September offered Emily a slight reprieve in the form of a holiday to Tenby, Wales (although she had to take her "medicaments" with her and apply them herself). When the family returned to London on the 2nd of October, Dr. Fell "advised the removal of the tumour". To this end:

On the 10th, therefore, my beloved, accompanied by our little boy, her faithful companion and assiduous nurse throughout her trial, removed to a lodging in Pimlico, uncomfortable in many respects, but presenting the advantage of being next door to Dr. F--'s own residence. The next morning, October 11th, the process of extraction commenced (A Memorial 28).

As she endured repeated applications of the "secret medicament", it became evident that surgery could not have been any more painful than the local treatment the Gosses chose. With scientific exactitude, Philip Gosse records in A Memorial (and Anna censors in Tell Jesus!) the medical procedure his wife underwent on her return from Tenby:

The whole surface of the left breast, an area of four inches in diameter, was wetted with nitric acid, applied by means of a small bit of sponge tied to the end of a stick. . . . With the scalpel he drew, on the surface of the now exposed flesh, a series of parallel scratches, about half an inch apart, reaching from the top to the bottom. When these were made, a plaister of a purple mucilaginous substance was spread over the whole (A Memorial 28-29).

As could be expected, the "effect of this application was very distressing. In about an hour after its renewal every morning, the breast began to be the seat of an aching, piercing pain" (29). The "mucilaginous" substance eventually destroyed the tumour, which "was brought to a woody hardness" (32) and was finally dislodged from the living flesh.

Emily's illness gradually wore down her constitution, so that she could not sleep without the help of opiates<sup>s</sup>, much less concentrate on writing religious tracts and performing other spiritual duties. After more than seven months of the "cure", the doctor was forced to admit that it was hopeless. Despite significant removal of the tumour, the cancer had gone too far, spreading into her blood. It was decided that nothing more could be done for her at Pimlico and she was taken home on Christmas Eve. There, "she was put under the care of a homoeopathic physician, Dr. John Epps, whose gentle treatment alleviated her final pain" (Thwaite 32).

She died only six weeks after she returned home. Although she was in less pain, she developed consumption, and towards the very end suffered partial loss of speech and slight paralysis on one side. After her death, Philip Gosse and Anna Shipton recreate the story of her last days on earth, laying special emphasis on the example she provides for other Christians and the implicit similarities between her "passion" and Christ's. Half a century after their biographical efforts were published, Emily's son tells his version of the story of her illness and death in the early chapters of Father and Son.

### III. Emily's Imitation of Christ.

As innocent sufferer, Emily Gosse resembles Christ and Job. A Memorial and Tell Jesus! hold her up as a model for the believer's imitation of Christ. In doing so, Philip and Anna testify to the pervasiveness of tropology in the Victorian Evangelical ethos--an intellectual atmosphere which Landow documents in Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows. Landow argues that a heart-felt, imaginative experience of Christ was one of the theological trademarks of Evangelical religion; the believer was encouraged to "project himself imaginatively into his Saviour's agonies and feel their saving effect upon himself" (17). In reference to the ministry of a typical Victorian preacher, Henry Melvill, Landow explains the way in which typology and tropology accommodate each other:

Melvill . . . so widen(s) the application of the individual type that he finds in it something very

like the old tropological (or moral) sense of scripture; that is, by joining typology to the notion that the believer must make himself into an imitation of Christ, Melvill discovers moral instruction in scriptural history which . . . has divine authentication stamped upon it (49).

In Philip Gosse and Shipton's memoirs, Emily is portrayed as an accomplished imitator of Christ, and the readers in turn are encouraged to imitate her imitation. For example, after Emily's death, one of her friends declared: "and now it remains for us to follow her as she sought to follow Christ" (A Memorial 81). Furthermore, in Tell Jesus! Anna describes Emily's Christ-like ministry, as manifested one morning after she had spent a restless night at Emily's house: "That night for me was sleepless. It was the Lord's dear hand in all, and but for it I should have failed to read another trait of Himself in my gentle hostess" (Shipton 36).

Anna's anecdote serves as an illustration of how the subject of her memoir tried to imitate the "inasmuch" injunction in Matthew 25:40. Emily got up early to see to her guest's needs, lighting "the fire in her husband's study, to avoid disturbing the servants". Anna protested against this special treatment:

When I told her how grieved I was for her to rise to do this, her reply was like herself:  
"Supposing that yesterday Jesus had rested in your lodgings on his way to Jerusalem, weary with his journey, and you knew He had been watching all night, should you have thought it any hardship to rise an hour or two earlier than usual to give Him refreshment? . . . He says to me, 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto her, you have done it unto Me'" (Shipton 36-37).

At what point does the imitation of Christ and the stories in the scriptures shade into something resembling

blasphemy? Of the two memoirs in question, Tell Jesus! seems to cross the line separating tropology from blasphemy the most blatantly. Anna constructs a "Christ-figure" from the bones of her friend, whom she believes is an "epistle", a proclaimer of the gospel, and miracle-worker. For instance, Anna interprets her friend's illness in typological terms, making Christ's journey through Samaria a type in relationship to Emily's suffering as antitype. Chapter five of Tell Jesus! opens with these words from the Fourth Gospel: "He must needs go through Samaria" John 4:4. Anna explicates the passage as follows:

It was good for the Samaritans that Jesus was weary and faint with travel; but for that link of the blessing, He had not tarried two days in Samaria, where many knew Him as "indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Emily must needs go through a strange country, to testify of the love and faithfulness of Him who had said, "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not!" (Shipton 56).

Anna "covers herself" by making Emily testify of Him instead of personify Him directly. Emily is like the woman at the well who called out: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). Yet it could be argued that it is Emily herself who travels through Samaria, imitating Christ's journey. Thus the author of Tell Jesus! identifies Emily with the typological role of Christ while at the same time comparing her to the Samaritan woman with five husbands. Anna herself seems willing to play the dumbfounded and admiring woman, testifying to the Christ-like nature of her friend. Anna's ability to read herself into the scriptures resembles

Edmund's propensity to read himself into the lives of the poets.

#### IV.i. Tell Jesus! as Gospel.

In her zeal to portray the Christological features of Emily Gosse, the author of Tell Jesus! in effect writes a blasphemous "Gospel" which inserts the name of Emily into the scriptures. She substitutes Jesus' personal pronoun with "Emily", making the Fourth Gospel passage read "Emily must needs go through Samaria" (John 4:4). This kind of tropological substitution continues throughout the memoir, with the story of Emily's death ending with the words: "they took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Shipton 110). Emily's own death is read in terms of the burial of John the Baptist, and thus Anna is associated with John's disciples who "took the body and buried it" (Matthew 14:12). By extension, Emily as John the Baptist could be compared to the Savior that John foreshadowed (Mark 1:7).

Throughout Tell Jesus!, Anna assumes the role of humble disciple, and in this she resembles Edmund Gosse in relation to the poets he memorialized in his biographies. Although Anna only knew Emily for the last two years of her life, Emily had a tremendous impact on her friend's soul: "I did but gather up the crumbs from the table at which she feasted with the King. These have been multiplied as the fragments of old, and have nourished others; for the Lord commanded them to be gathered" (Shipton 2). Emily's story is now read in terms of the story of the miracle of the loaves and



fishes, making reference to Jesus' words to his disciples in the Fourth Gospel, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). Moreover, Anna alludes to the words of the Canaanite woman: "Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:27).

Emily's words and example become spiritual food, the crumbs of which nourish her follower, Anna--a disciple who is determined to satisfy herself with the edible Christian woman that is Emily. Furthermore, Anna's writing is what helps to multiply these "fragments" of Emily so that she may be shared Eucharistically with the readers of Tell Jesus!. Anna creates the "Gospel" of her deceased "master", and in turn she tries to insert Emily's sacred story into the pages of the Bible itself.

In previous chapters, we have seen how the Gosse family made the Bible the foundation of their lives and applied it to themselves tropologically. They tried to internalize and "live" the Bible and in effect they became living Bibles. Anna further confirms the "scriptural" nature of her friend when she names Emily as "one of God's epistles, known and read of all men, whose influence, through the love therein written, leaves the reader nearer heaven than it found him" (Shipton 12). Here Anna alludes to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians: "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all" (2 Cor. 3:2).

Anna continues her account of how Emily came to be "written on her heart":

Until I met Emily Gosse, I had never seen a child

of God following the Lord fully . . . nor witnessed Christ and his glory in the life of man or woman, as the one sole object of their existence (Shipton 13).

For Anna, "reading" Emily upon first impact was like reading the Bible; indeed, it was probably more powerful and influential. Anna and Emily's first meeting is described in the language of conversion, with Emily providing a revelation of the glory of Christ in woman<sup>6</sup>.

Philip Gosse joins in the divinization game in his memorial to Emily:

She had strongly taught that, in the matter of salvation, God's simple Yea and Amen is a rock stable enough to stand on, without any support besides. He chose that she should give a dying testimony to the same truth; that she should herself be the testimony; that she should herself be content to pass into eternity with no other support than the Word of "the unlying God" (A Memorial 71-72).

The context of this passage is Philip's description of the final days of Emily's life, where she is not granted the visions that she had hoped for, but instead is forced to rest on faith in the Word alone. As she approached death, Emily's oral and written Christian testimony becomes transformed and she herself becomes a text, a "dying testimony".

Emily committed the "sin" of writing for as long as she could until her illness rendered her incapable of it, and her last three tracts were valiantly published from her sickroom in Pimlico (Shipton 84). Yet as the end drew nearer, "She wrote no more" (Shipton 85), and in this she resembles the silent Christ who does not write his own spiritual autobiography. It is the disciple's task to write Christ's Gospel. In Emily's case, her husband and friend

became "Gossepel" writers who borrow Biblical imagery and phraseology in order to tell the story of her ministry, suffering, and death.

#### IV.ii. Use of Typology in the "Gossepels" and Emily's Parables.

One of the Biblical patterns that Emily's biographers borrow is typology. And in a textual sense, Tell Jesus! in particular serves as an antitype to Emily's "Recollections". Anna, upon reading Emily's 1835 journal, commented:

it is too obscure to enable me to trace much that would be interesting in the growth and development of the divine life in her soul. . . . To those who had the privilege of knowing her, it very imperfectly shadows the work of grace that was developed in the noon of her life (Shipton 41-42).

Perhaps Anna found the diary obscure because it presented a version of Emily that was more sinful and "human" than she was prepared to accept. The "Recollections" undermine the authorial mastery which Anna exercised over Emily's biography.

Shadow becomes embodied text in Tell Jesus!, where the hint of saintliness present in Emily's 1835 journal becomes incarnated in her dying flesh in 1857, and canonized in 1863 with the publication of Tell Jesus!. Anna colors in the sketch of a life which the "Recollections" foreshadow. With the composition of a "hagiography" in the form of Tell Jesus!, the imperfect image of Emily becomes perfected and made complete (and less "obscure") by the efforts of Anna's

pen. So also Father and Son tries to achieve the same perfection in relation to his mother's autobiography.

In her efforts to multiply the fragments of Emily's ministry, Anna imitates Emily's own ministry-by-writing. Emily published numerous tracts and served as an evangelical colporteur in public places; and these activities promoted her ambition to convert people through the "fruits of her pen" (A Memorial 3). Before the year 1856 was over

at least two instances were brought to her knowledge of her Gospel Tracts having been blessed to the decided conversion of souls. And the grace of the Lord was displayed to her also, in causing these testimonies to the blood of Christ, the fruits of her pen, to be spread very widely, even to the most distant parts of the globe, the results of which will be fully known when the harvest of this sowing-time shall be gathered in (A Memorial 3).

The tracts are "testimonies" to salvation, and when she could no longer write them, she herself became a testimony<sup>7</sup>.

The tracts share with the Gospels a claim to being true<sup>8</sup>, as well as a propensity to teach in parables. For example, Emily Gosse's Narrative Tract number 50, "The Cure for Cholera", offers the parable of the Good Physician: "I suppose I hardly need to explain my parable. My reader, is not the sick man's case your own? Jesus is the good physician; his blood the infallible remedy" (4). In another tract, "A Home and a Hearty Welcome", she explains to a fellow train passenger the metaphorical connection between our earthly and heavenly home: "I hope also that when the journey of life is passed, you have a comfortable and happy home in prospect, for eternity" (2). Thus, Emily's parables

and metaphors undermine Edmund's criticism of her literal-mindedness.

In her witnessing-sessions with strangers, Emily would often speak in parables. Anna relates an incident that occurred in the Pimlico waiting room in which Emily employs a parable about a patent in her exhortations:

"If I wanted to recommend a patent," said Emily, observing how little testimony is usually given for Jesus, owing to the fear of man, "I should not at the first setting out force it; but if I were travelling to make my master's patent known, be sure that in whatsoever society I was cast, I should let it be seen" (Shipton 65).

Edmund inherited this ability to "seize an analogy" (F&S 51), as when he makes a comparison between house-cleaning and salvation (see chapter two). The Gosses' literary repertoire included the ability to create parables, analogies, and allegories, as well as to think in terms of historical type and antitype. Moreover, the fact that Emily's tracts are called "narrative" tracts might suggest that they offer a theologically safe alternative to the sin of fictional narrative.

IV. iii. Emily's Apostolic Ministry: Witnessing, Preaching, Miracles.

Emily's ministry is granted almost apostolic dimensions in A Memorial and Tell Jesus!. In the year before her death, Emily

had reason to judge the sound conversion to God of three young persons within a few weeks, by the instrumentality of her conversations with them. Others were impressed, and appeared convinced of their sinful state . . . (A Memorial 3).

Philip Gosse also records another "fragment" of Emily's ministry, a fragment both in Anna's "miraculous" sense as well as a textual one, in that it is just a "short story". He writes: "The following fragment, found in her note-book among papers . . . will serve as a fair specimen of these casual conversations, and also of her power of familiarly presenting gospel truth to those whom she addressed" (A Memorial 20-21). The conversations in question refer to those which Emily engaged in on the last holiday she ever took, to Tenby, Wales in the late summer of 1856. She was in great pain, but nevertheless

There were few days, however, in which she was not to be seen, according to her custom, on the sand, offering her tracts to the visitors, conversing with a bathing-woman, or sitting on the rocks by the side of some nursery governess or mother, sowing, in her own effective way, the good seed of the kingdom (A Memorial 20)°.

As Edmund was later exhorted to do, Emily testified to gospel grace "in season and out of season". The "fragment" which her husband preserved tells the story of how Emily "ventured to accost" a young governess she did not know very well, asking her:

"Well, Miss----; what are you doing to serve the Lord?"

"Nothing. I am doing nothing."

"How is that; if He has redeemed you, loved you, washed you?" (A Memorial 21-22).

The conversation continues, with Emily telling yet another parable, this one about a King "who had one son, and it was his pleasure to select for this son a wife from among the humblest of his subjects" (A Memorial 22). The King chose the most abject peasant woman he could lay his hands on and said "Will you be my daughter-in-law?" (23).

Emily is as concerned to explain the meaning of the King parable as she was in her tract about the good physician: "'Do you see this, Miss ---?' continued I; 'you are the King's adopted child; he invites you to his palace, and offers to supply you with every grace' (24)<sup>10</sup>. A reading of the governess-witness "fragment" could incriminate Emily with the sin of spiritual pride. She seems to take pleasure in the role of wise woman, judge, and parabolic storyteller. Here, her ministry is more "literary" than Edmund acknowledged.

Part of Emily's effectiveness lies in her ability to listen and empathize with other people's stories. Her husband remarks: "She possessed a remarkable power of obtaining the confidence of strangers. It was quite a common incident for a chance companion in an omnibus to open up to her the history of a life" (24). After the stranger had confessed all her troubles, Emily seized the opportunity to introduce "higher topics" (25).

Yet as the cancer progressed, Emily's Christ-like ministry became more focussed on the narrow sphere of

movement to which her illness confined her. Philip praises his wife's mission to the patients and relatives in the Pimlico waiting room:

It was beautiful to see the kind winning smile with which she would go through a room full of people, most of them strangers, offering to each one of her own Gospel Tracts, or saying some little word of grace and kindness, undeterred by the scornful refusal of some, and the stolid indifference of others (A Memorial 37).

Emily testifies of "Jesus' love" (37) to the vulnerable sinner, the lonely stranger, the cancer patient. Her intuition sought out souls who might be pliable, just as the system of religious education endorsed in Abraham and His Children sought to mould the wills of children while they were still malleable.

Yet Emily was not all theory and no action:

Many of the patients were poor. . . . Her character was eminently practical; she did not let her sympathy evaporate in sentimental speeches, but at once set about seeing what could be done (A Memorial 39).

Anna reads her waiting-room ministry in angelic terms:

"Among these poor stricken ones, Emily Gosse moved as a ministering angel" (Shipton 58)<sup>11</sup>.

Mrs. Hislop, a friend of the "ministering angel", testifies to Emily's preaching talents. During the course of one of the latter's pastoral rounds in the waiting room at Pimlico: "She came at length to a poor man who appeared to be in a very suffering state, and asked him about his hope for eternity. He replied to the effect that he hoped he should do pretty well." This reasonably spirited reply did not amuse Emily, and she "solemnly said, 'There is but



one way to be saved;--the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin" (A Memorial 39)<sup>12</sup>.

Yet the author of Tell Jesus! can outdo Mrs. Hislop's story. Anna so idealizes her friend that she attributes to her the power of working miracles, thus further reinforcing the idea of Emily as Gospel protagonist. However, it must be admitted that Emily's miracles are fairly "minor league" in comparison to the ones described in the Gospels. For instance, Emily once told Anna that she disapproved of the "valuable ornaments" she wore (Shipton 72). Anna did not reform at first, but one day when she was praying by the side of a sick person, the sunlight from the window shone on the ring which Emily had criticized. The "gleam of sunlight . . . was only a type of the beam of love that fell upon my soul!" (Shipton 74). Anna interpreted it as a sign, repented, and then took all her trinkets and "lay them at the feet of my gracious Lord with tears of joy" (Shipton 74). This story demonstrates Anna's tendency to create a "fictional" character in the form of her friend, the prophet and miracle-worker.

#### IV.iv. Tropological Imitation of the Scriptures.

Emily's imitation of Christ also encompasses the imitation of his disciples, and what allows her to do this is her ability to be on intimate terms with Biblical figures. Emily adopts a disciple's privilege to be on a first name basis with the Lord: "In conversation, as well as in her writings, my beloved was accustomed to speak of Jesus

by this his personal appellation" (A Memorial 64)<sup>13</sup>. Anna Shipton praises this familiar attitude to Jesus, declaring to her readers: "Why deal with your heavenly Friend with more strangeness and less confidence than with an earthly friend" (Shipton 39).

Intimacy with characters in the Bible, as well as the capacity to internalize the scriptures, is maintained consistently to the end of Emily's life. A Memorial describes how the narrative of the Fourth Gospel was incorporated into the story of the last stages of Emily's illness (thus creating Emily's "passion"). Philip writes:

A week or two before her departure, the course of reading in family worship brought us to John xiii. I had made a few remarks on the grace of the Lord in purging his own from defilement, and on the various modes in which He effects it; and turning to her, I said, "Jesus is washing your feet now, love!" This little observation was . . . to her great comfort and refreshment . . . and thenceforth it became one of her favourite words until the last,--"Jesus is washing my feet!" (A Memorial 61-62).

Tropology substitutes the disciple's feet with those of an individual believer, allowing "their" feet to become "yours" and "my" feet. Feet in the Bible and the feet of a contemporary Victorian become indistinguishable, as the words of the scripture become a script which is acted out in the last days of Emily's life. The relevant Biblical text is from the thirteenth chapter of the Fourth Gospel:

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world. . . . He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet (vs. 1, 4-5).

The text continues with Peter telling Jesus that he doubts that He will ever wash his feet. Jesus answers: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8).

John Darby, the main founder of the Brethren movement, found an important theological message in the feet-washing story. In his Gospel Sermons, he interprets Jesus' action as a testimony to the fact that His love for his disciples "would continue after He had left them" (93). Reading the passage allegorically, Darby perceives that the image of water in the story could be interpreted on more than one level:

His blood is in their place; they are washed, born of water and of the Spirit, through which they are clean every whit, but . . . our feet are continually defiled; we live in a defiling world, our earthly nature continues (97).

Here, Edmund's denial of the allegorical and symbolic elements in the Brethren tradition is again refuted.

Although Philip Gosse was not a Darbyite, his remarks about the Lord "purging his own from defilement" (A Memorial 61-62) complement Darby's interpretation. Emily's feet are being washed in preparation for leaving the defiled and defiling world. For Darby, what defiles us is a sense of guilt and sin which "interrupts our communion with God" (Darby 97). The Gospel story is applied tropologically to the individual believer: "because we have a part with Christ . . . He never ceases to wash our feet. How does He wash them? By removing from our mind and conscience everything that interrupts our communion with God and its glory and blessedness" (97).

The belief that Jesus was washing her feet was a comforting one to Emily, but it also suggests the "blasphemous" comfort of assuming the role of a Biblical figure who received the love of Christ in person, through his physical touch. The believer makes up stories like "Jesus is washing my feet" in order to receive the blessing personally, shoving the original protagonists aside in order to more fully enter into His presence.

Emily's belief that Christ loved her as much as the original disciples is reflected in her favorite lines from a Toplady hymn: "Nor wilt Thou relinquish at last/A sinner so signally loved". Philip, Anna, and Edmund all mention these verses when they write about Emily's death. Anna recalls that Emily dwelt on the words "A sinner so signally loved" with "peculiar delight" (Shipton 86). In a more literary vein, Edmund writes:

Among all my childish memories none is clearer than  
my looking up,--after reading, in my high treble  
. . . Nor wilt Thou relinquish at last/A sinner so  
signally lov'd,--and hearing my Mother, her eyes  
brimming with tears and her alabastrine fingers  
tightly locked together, murmur in unconscious  
repetition: "Nor wilt thou relinquish at last/A  
sinner so signally loved" (F&S 73-74).

The writers of Emily's life-story interpret it in terms of the discipleship of a beloved sinner. She is also a sinning prophet, with her biographers projecting her into the Biblical landscape of the Pisgah view. Landow argues in Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, that the tropological reenactment of the Pisgah vision was successfully accommodated to both secular and religious conventions

concerned with Victorian death-bed scenes. The Biblical precedent for the Pisgah sight occurs in Deuteronomy 34:

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan . . . And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham . . . I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither (Deut. 34:1,4).

Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land because he disobeyed one of God's orders concerning the smiting of a rock.

Emily's last days, like Moses', were a mixture of disappointment and hope--disappointment that she was not granted any visions of heaven, but hope because she rested on faith alone. Emily's personal Pisgah view was from a window, as her husband recounts:

Her last day on earth was now come. It was one of brilliant sunshine--a lovely day for mid-winter; and as we moved her couch towards the window, for the taking of the . . . photograph, and saw the bright sunlight stream upon her countenance, we little thought she would see that sun no more (A Memorial 72).

The sun on Emily's countenance seems to reify her, make a halo around her face. She said: "I shall see his bright face, and shall shine in his brightness, and shall sing his praise in strains never uttered below" (A Memorial 72-73)<sup>14</sup>. Emily's tragic scene is similar to the one described in The Way of All Flesh (44), where Ernest's great-grandfather bids farewell to the sun. It is also reproduced in parody form in the final chapter of Father and Son, where Edmund's Pisgah sight from a window leads to cynicism about the second coming (234-35).

Echoing the sentiments of Philip Gosse, Anna is impressed and moved by his wife's trust in God in face of no sensible hope. Anna avows that Emily had been called "to a yet deeper experience . . . of simple faith and trust in the word and promise of that living God, whom, not seeing, they still love" (Shipton 106). Philip admits that Emily hoped for a vision of the afterlife: "In published descriptions of happy death-beds, such things are not unfrequently spoken of; and I think . . . that she in some measure hoped they would be vouchsafed to herself (A Memorial 70)<sup>15</sup>. Yet she is not visited by the standard visions, and her death bed is hardly "happy". As she confesses to a "sister in Christ": "I have peace, but not joy. It would not do to go into eternity with a lie in my mouth" (A Memorial 69).

Not daunted by her honesty, Emily's husband tries to explain the possible advantages to having an unconventional, vision-free death:

But may I not affirm that God gave her a better thing? For surely it was a nobler testimony that she could calmly face death, "resting on his Word, his Inspiration," than any she might have given respecting the most rapturous sensible manifestations? Like the old worthies, "witnessed unto" by the Holy Ghost, she "died in faith" (A Memorial 70-71).

In typological terms, Emily is like the worthies described in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report" (Hebrews 11:1-2)<sup>16</sup>. The Biblical examples of faith in action include: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen

them far off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Hebrews 11:13). Philip's typological comparison of his wife to the old worthies is a creative hermeneutic act which bears witness to his ability to see correspondences between Biblical worthies and nineteenth-century worthies.

With her Pisgah view and trusting faith, Emily resembles another "Old Worthy", Moses. As in Moses' case, disappointment is tempered with confidence, the failure of promised visions overcome by faith. Landow writes in Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows:

Moses' dying vision on Mt. Pisgah serves as a divinely intended prefiguration of the kind of Christian death so frequently urged by Evangelical preachers, tract writers, and poets, for Mt. Pisgah stands as a type of the deathbed of the true believer who leaves this life confident in his faith (207).

Here, the description of Emily's "last days on earth" conform to expected convention<sup>17</sup>.

Emily further conforms to familiar Victorian death rites when she bestows a final blessing and benediction on her child. In this she resembles Jacob when he blesses his sons and grandsons in Genesis 49. The source of the dedication scene in Father and Son can be found in his father's memoir, which records Emily's dying words:

"I shall walk with Him in white; won't you take your lamb, and walk with me?" The last sentence she repeated twice or thrice, as she saw that I did not readily catch her meaning. I believe, however, she alluded to our dear little boy (A Memorial 75).

By this time, Emily had "experienced a partial paralysis of the tongue" (74) and in a manuscript written by her husband

entitled "Dying words of my Emily", even more doubt is cast on the meaning of her words:

I believe she alluded to Willy, or else to herself, for "My lamb!" was one of the terms of endearment which I had habitually used to her, especially in these her last sufferings. Her speech was now so thick that a great deal was unintelligible; only a sentence now and then could be made out. (document #53 pasted in CUL Rare Books' copy of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse).

Emily's storytelling sins are avenged here, death bringing on complete inarticulateness. The "sin" of tropology is also in evidence, with the suffering Emily becoming a sacrificial Lamb, an antitype of Christ. Her sufferings seem to transcend His own.

Despite the difficulties, Philip Gosse is nevertheless able to find religious meaning in the fragmented words of his dying wife: "she still spoke, incoherently, or at least unintelligibly, but still of Him whose "best wine for his beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak" (Song vii.9)" (A Memorial 76-77). Hours before she died, she "turned her dimming eyes" on her husband and said

"Dear Papa, I'm all ready."  
"What has made you ready?" I asked.  
"The blood." Then she added, after a momentary pause, "The blood of the Lamb".  
This precious testimony was the last sentence that issued from her lips. It had been her joy in life to proclaim the sufficiency of that blood, and now she died on it (A Memorial 77-78).

The suffering Lamb now becomes the redemptive sacrifice whose blood readies Emily for death and cleanses her sins (I John i.7). Yet if she herself is the Lamb, then it seems to be her own blood, poisoned by cancer, which both kills and



saves her, and thus she becomes her own Christ. And if the two lambs--mother and child--are indistinguishable, then both are sacrificed at her death-bed, transforming Edmund's dedication into a violent act performed at the "altar" of his mother.

Emily, and by extension, her son, become sacrificial lambs, and a passage from Father and Son supports this interpretation. Edmund describes how the treatment at Pimlico was ineffective and horribly painful:

the savage treatment . . . had to be abandoned, and a day or two before Christmas, while the fruits were piled in the shop-fronts and the butchers were shouting outside their forests of carcasses, my Father brought us back in a cab through the streets to Islington, a feeble and languishing company (F&S 76).

As Douglas Brooks-Davies has observed in Fielding, Dickens, Gosse, Iris Murdoch and Oedipal Hamlet (1989), images of sacrifice and butchery are present in the metaphorical patterns of Father and Son. (They are also present in the medical butchery Philip describes in A Memorial). Brooks-Davies perceives that the piles of Christmas meat foreshadow Emily's imminent death:

The self-conscious boy-victim, the lamb his mother will offer as sacrifice with her dying breath, is mocked by the mute and awful juxtaposition of dying woman and festal carcasses which have proliferated to celebrate the motherhood and infancy that are at the root of her faith (134).

We will see how "festal carcasses" become festal robes in the Christian vision which Anna Shipton receives concerning Emily's death, but a Freudian reading of the blood and the Lamb also seems appropriate, revealing the Oedipal and sexual undertones of menstrual blood, sexual "readiness", and animal sacrifice. For Philip Gosse, however, his

typological reading of Emily's suffering is an imaginative and cathartic act which testifies to the fact that he possessed far more "sympathetic imagination" than Edmund acknowledged.

#### IV.v. Differing "Gospel" Accounts of Emily's Death.

In a manner similar to the way in which the four Gospels of the New Testament contradict each other in their accounts of Jesus' last days on earth, the two biographies also differ in their description of Emily's "passion". Take, for instance, Anna's manipulation of Emily's death-bed scene. Anna quotes the scene in A Memorial where Emily testifies that the blood of the Lamb has made her ready for death, but omits the following passage (which is the second paragraph after the Lamb scene in A Memorial):

A few minutes after this she fell into a heavy doze, breathing stertorously with laborious heaving and with opened mouth. . . . In about three quarters of an hour I resumed my place by her side; she was as I left her, and they [the maids] told me she had not uttered a word, except once, that she said, "Papa!" The breathing was now feebler, with less of the rattling of the phlegm. Presently she again breathed the familiar word, "Papa!" which was the last word she uttered on earth.

The next paragraph continues:

Her eyes now became fixed, and she was evidently unconscious, in no way noticing anything we said or did, till, exactly at one o'clock, she breathed a long expiration, and ceased. I laid her dear head, which for an hour had been on my arm, on the pillow, closed her eyes . . . (A Memorial 78-79).

What was it that offended Anna in this passage? First of all, the author's intimate familiarity with the sufferer's body might have made her uneasy (or jealous). There is the

open mouth and heavy breathing, the cry to "Papa!" and the "rattling of the phlegm" combined with the tenderness present in Philip resting her head on his arm and closing her eyes. The description is both voyeuristic and loving.

Anna replaces it with a "fictional", more Evangelical description, following the final blood of the Lamb testimony with these words: "She noticed nothing more, and exactly as the hour proclaimed a new day dawning, a brighter one broke upon her vision. One long-drawn sigh, and the happy spirit had entered the gate" (Shipton 110). Here, sentimentality serves to depersonalize the death-bed scene; the dying, suffering Emily that Philip describes is forced into the role of "the happy spirit". Anna trades his precise terminology for more poetic images. "Exactly at one o'clock" becomes the hour which proclaims "a new day dawning". Emily's "expiration" becomes a "long-drawn sigh".

For Anna, detailed descriptions of medical procedure, such as the Memorial provides, seem inimical to proper literature. By "purifying" and fictionalizing Philip's account, Anna tries to rescue it for Victorian convention. She sentimentalizes it in order to avoid the elements in Philip's text which speak of the physical realities of death. Censoring the sensual and the scatological details from A Memorial, Anna manipulates the death-bed description for literary and theological purposes. In a sense, Tell Jesus!'s determination to embark on a program of "cleaning up" A Memorial can be perceived as an effort to write "fiction". Anna re-writes the latter in order to gloss over the graphic descriptions of Emily's diseased body. Tell

Jesus! tells the story again with the gory passages firmly exorcised from the text<sup>18</sup>.

Edmund is also guilty of fictionalizing his mother's illness and death. For example, he dramatizes the scene where his father first learns about the nature of Emily's illness. Philip describes in A Memorial how his wife broke the news: "She returned to me in the afternoon, met me with her usual quiet smile, and with unbroken calmness told me that he [the doctor] pronounced it cancer!" (5-6). In Father and Son, the same scene reads as follows:

After falling asleep on this particular evening, I awoke silently, surprised to see two lighted candles on the table, and my Father seated writing by them . . . the door opened, and my Mother entered the room; she emerged from behind the bed-curtains, with her bonnet on, having returned from her expedition. My Father rose hurriedly, pushing back his chair. There was a pause, while my Mother seemed to be steadying her voice, and then she replied, loudly and distinctly, 'He says it is---' and she mentioned one of the most cruel maladies by which our poor mortal nature can be tormented. Then I saw them fold one another in a silent long embrace, and presently sink together out of sight on their knees . . . whereupon my Father lifted up his voice in prayer (F&S 69).

Edmund lengthens and dramatizes the account, altering almost every detail of his father's concise sentence. The afternoon is transformed into evening, darkness being more suitable for the emotional atmosphere of the scene, especially with the added details of the silent child and lonely man writing by candlelight. The woman in the first passage is quiet and calm, but in the second she has to steady her voice before she pronounces the dreadful words in a loud voice. Philip is able to write the word "cancer" but his son is not. One of the most significant alterations is the insertion of Edmund himself to the scene. His father

never mentions his presence in the passage from A Memorial, but Edmund appropriates to himself the role of silent observer and passive participant<sup>19</sup>.

#### V. Fictional Theodicies.

One of the perceived duties of Emily's biographers is the need to explain the meaning of her suffering and death in theodical terms. Yet in trying to explain and interpret, Philip and Anna end up constructing a narrative that seems artificial; they trivialize inexplicable suffering by turning it into a story or Biblical lesson. For despite the solace Emily received from words like "Jesus is washing my feet", what makes the account of her death at age fifty-one so sad is that her "punishment" seems out of proportion to her sins. If we are to believe her friend, her husband, and her son, she was a gifted spiritual mentor, a woman whose faith was sincere and consistent. If this was true, then why was an innocent woman made to suffer so much? Why did the new cancer treatment, something they believed was an answer to prayer, turn out to be more agonizing than any of the other alternatives? Was it because the victim told stories as a child or sometimes boasted about her piety?

In the stories Emily's "disciples" tell after her death, she emerges as a female Job, an upright and righteous person who is forced to undergo a painful ordeal for no good (human) reason. Her comforters, Philip and Anna, try to make sense of the "only problem"<sup>20</sup> in a number of ways, but their theodicies somehow make the reality of her suffering

seem more stark and inexplicable. They betray her by distancing themselves from pain, achieving enough mastery of the situation to inscribe theological texts on her body. David Jasper provides an explanation of this process in his forthcoming book Readings in the Canon of Scripture:

The way in which texts impose themselves on our bodies . . . and bodies themselves become texts uneasily and disturbingly present in interpreted and coercive con-texts. Nowhere is this coercion more powerful than in the Bible (49).

In the "coercive context" of Emily's narrative death, biography can be a nasty business, violating the person it is ostensibly honoring. Here, typology becomes a means of denying the reality of individual suffering by always reading it in terms of Biblical suffering.

Elaine Scarry, in The Body in Pain (1985), makes the point that "[whatever] pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language" (4). Nevertheless, it is the unspeakably painful nature of Emily's illness which seems to have challenged Anna in particular to interpret, understand, and write about it. Her conclusions are conventionally Biblical (after the fashion of Proverbs) and ultimately unsatisfying. She decides that her friend must have sinned or else she would not need to be purified by fire. She is self-consciously like Eliphaz and Elihu, quoting the latter's observations about dreams in chapter three of Tell Jesus!.

In congress with these comforters, Anna implicitly accepts conventional wisdom's confidence in the inexorable connection between cause and effect, suffering and sin:

"Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?" (Job 4:7) and "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation. . . . The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish" (Proverbs 10:25,28). At the heart of Anna's justification of Emily's death lies the belief that she was being purified and taught by cancer.

Philip shares Anna's convictions on one level, refusing to blame God for "purging his own from defilement" (A Memorial 61-62). But what was the defilement from which Emily needed to be purged? Original sin? Motherhood? Philip suggests that her sin was worldly happiness. Before they learned of Emily's cancer they had

known nothing but ease and happiness in the seven years of our married life; and it was not unfrequently remarked by us to each other, that the common lot, the badge of discipleship, seemed to be unknown to us. . . . Alas! it was soon to end. It is not for the eternal bliss of God's children, that their nest should be undisturbed; and therefore He pulls it to pieces, and says "Set your affections on things above!" (A Memorial 4-5).

The Biblical source for this theodicy comes from Job 29:18, but with or without Biblical backing, the idea that God would punish a person for being too happy is not a comforting one<sup>21</sup>.

Despite the fact that Emily may have brought suffering upon herself, Anna is nevertheless certain that some blessing can be derived from it; she tries to redeem suffering and put it to work for the reader's (and her own) spiritual edification. Determined to find a lesson in every affliction, she explains why it was necessary for her friend to endure so much: "To have sunk under painless disease, in

an atmosphere of praise and joy, would have had little teaching in comparison to . . . almost unmitigated suffering" (Shipton 97). Pain is sanctified and the sick chamber provides the spiritual setting for "[some] deeper lesson to be learnt, some secret thing of God to be revealed, some hitherto unknown manifestation of the Comforter" (87). Suffering reveals a "deep, hidden message of love" (53). The sickroom is a sanctuary from the world which provides the conditions for meditation on the Passion and the opportunity to connect it to one's own pain.

Anna refuses to admit that there is a dark, ineffable side to pain and disease. The chapter of Tell Jesus! which describes the worst of Emily's cancer treatment and convalescence is entitled "The Valley of Blessing". She goes so far as to say, in reference to Emily's original diagnosis, that "the worst was confirmed--which was the best. The chariot which was to convey her home from her labours to the eternal rest in the bosom of the Lord she loved was in motion" (48). Philip also employs allusive language when he says: "the messenger commissioned [appeared] to take down her tabernacle, and consummate her joy by removing her to the presence of her Lord" (A Memorial 4). According to Anna, all things are bright and beautiful at Pimlico, even when "Dear Emily had indeed entered into the furnace" (Shipton 70). It was the Lord's will that the cancer treatment failed there, so that "this furnace of peculiar character should be used in the purification of one whom He intended to honour" (Shipton 83).



True to form, Anna ends the painful Gospel of Emily with a combination of hope and didacticism. The last page of the "Home Reached" chapter displays a reproduction of the inscription on Emily's tombstone: "THE DUST OF EMILY GOSSE WHO SLEPT IN JESUS Feb. 9, 1857, WAITS HERE THE MORNING OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION" (111). The text on the tombstone provides the ultimate conclusion to Emily's story<sup>22</sup>. Just as the Gospels end with the story of Christ's resurrection, so Emily's Gossepel offers the hope of resurrection, making it easier to read her "passion" in optimistic terms.

#### VI.i. Biographical Exploitation.

Anna's optimism comes at the expense of fictionalizing Emily's story for ideological purposes. Just as Emily imposed the Samuel story on Edmund, so her biographers impose different versions of her death, complete with theodical commentary, over the experience of suffering. In doing so, they distance themselves from it, refusing to admit that there are some aspects of Emily's story which "resist" language. By transforming the inchoate into literature, they tell "lies" about Emily, betraying her by writing a text on her body when she can no longer write herself. So also, Emily wrote a life-script for Edmund before he could speak or write.

Anna in particular provides an example of the morally dubious role of the biographer. It is dubious in the sense that it often, as in Edmund's case, becomes an "excuse" to write autobiography: "Out of the many testimonies that Emily

Gosse bore for her beloved Lord, my memory most vividly retains those which affected my own spiritual life; this has, therefore, obliged me to write more of myself than I desired" (Shipton 1). Anna's spiritual "lie" is that she has no desire to write about herself. She may be Emily's disciple, but she possesses the power of a disciple to write her own particular version of the Gospel. In her desire to "Tell Jesus" by telling Emily, she also tells us a lot about Anna. As disciple and comforter, the holy figure which Anna honors and "comforts" is also her own creation, a character in a story who is not allowed to speak for herself. The Gospels provide a model for her Gossepel, but Tell Jesus! is nevertheless Anna's story as much (if not more so) than Emily's and Christ's.

Anna sees the disciples as types of herself. However, the point where typology shades into tropology is the space in which blasphemy could take root. When does the effort to imitate Christ and his apostles become a manifestation of megalomania? Anna so elevates the earthly ministry of her friend that she makes the message of the Christian scriptures into a type and her Gossepel an antitype. She describes Emily's teaching, preaching, writing, Christian witness, and miracles in such a way as to create a female rival to Jesus. In Anna's book at least, Emily Gosse reigned as supreme spiritual being and Anna saw herself as a kind of prophet to her greatness. As such, she took prophetic license with her story, creating a fictional Emily which seems very far removed from the "historical" Emily. Anna takes advantage of typology's interpretive flexibility

when she fashions an Emily type to serve her own authorial designs.

#### VI.ii. Anna's Dream.

In Tell Jesus!, Anna devotes a good part of a chapter to a prophetic dream she had about Emily. Anna's dream not only serves as an example of how typology can be used for fictional and "exploitative" purposes, but it also suggests much about the less than platonic relationship between the two friends (at least on Anna's side). At the beginning of chapter three, a quotation from Job 33:14-16 appears, providing a Biblical precedent for the relationship: Anna is Elihu to Emily's Job<sup>23</sup>. Anna's dream is legitimized by Elihu's description of prophetic dreaming: "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction" (Job 33: 14-16). Dreaming in the book of Job foreshadows Anna's dream about Emily.

Anna's dream provides an attempt to grasp the meaning of Emily's suffering, just as Anna made a "fictional" connection between Emily's sin and her suffering in order to avoid the possibility that suffering might have no meaning at all. By providing meaning, the dream serves an essentially theodical purpose: "I had a remarkable dream; if indeed I can term that a dream which appeared to me as a panorama of glorious significance, and in which I had no part but that of a spectator" (30). As Elihu explained in

Job 33, God's words and stories operate on two levels, the literal and the metaphorical. Anna tries to rescue the story of her friend's death for a "higher" level of meaning, thus revealing her allegorical abilities and providing further refutation of Edmund's criticism of the typological system. Anna's dream helps her to interpret the narrative of Tell Jesus! and transform it into a vision endowed with "glorious significance". She refuses to allow Emily's death to signify mere physical extinction.

The author of Tell Jesus! narrates her dream in lyrical fashion:

I beheld a chamber, dark with clouds. In the centre stood Emily. Angel hands from out the murky atmosphere clothed her in a heavy purple robe, the weight of which bent her body, pale and emaciated, almost to the earth (Shipton 30).

The robe allusion comes from John 19:1-2: "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe." Biblical images continue to surface in the dream-narrative, with the next paragraph borrowing from Psalm 91: "She walked as if in pain and weariness; but in their hands they bore her up, lest she should dash her foot against a stone" (Shipton 30). Psalm 91:10 promises that "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling", yet this promise contradicts John 19:1-2, which delivers the opposite.

Psalm 91 could have a darker meaning when placed in a New Testament context. In Matthew 4, the supportive angels provide a ruse for Satan to use against Jesus in the

wilderness;; "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6). Satan is here portrayed as a highly competent typological practitioner and he can be seen as a type in relation to Anna as antitype. She plays Satan to Emily's Christ, trying to force the false support of "silent communings" and visions upon her. The typological and literary temptation of Anna is to make her friend over into Christ, promising her the throne and the kingdom. Anna uses typology for "Satanic" purposes.

The plot of Anna's dream continues, with the chamber losing its darkness:

and her feet were set in that "large room," that lacketh neither light nor freedom; it was open to the sky. Beneath the angels' ministering hands, the heavy purple robe disappeared, and more and more visibly shone another robe, of surpassing beauty, in which they clothed her (Shipton 31).

Emily remained perfectly still and passive during the robing process, maintaining the attitude of a child being dressed by her mother in "festal garments". Grace was sufficient, for Emily "did nothing towards making herself ready" (31). The new robe was "white as the driven snow. . . . Its dazzling and transparent folds were fairer than the most delicate lawn, and glistened like the hoar frost in its silver brightness" (31). Anna borrows from poetic and Biblical convention here, ornamenting her dream with phrases like "hoar frost" and "driven snow", while at the same time grounding it in the story of Jesus' transfiguration:

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them (Mark 9:2-3).

The transfiguration theme recurs later in Tell Jesus!, when the author and Emily sit in the Pimlico waiting room: "A young lady whom she expected to meet her there failed in her appointment, and this gave us the opportunity of a prolonged conversation. We both said, "It is good to be here" (62), repeating Peter's words "it is good for us to be here" (Mark 9:5). Alone with Emily, her divinity becomes more manifest.

Emily's divine qualities become even more apparent as Anna's dream progresses. Relieved of her purple robe, "her countenance lost all trace of time, and pain, and weariness" and she was beautiful again (Shipton 31). Anna continues:

It was still Emily Gosse! growing fairer at every step, as, conducted by heavenly guides, she neared a two-leaved door; which, slightly ajar, permitted a few bright, slanting rays of golden light to fall upon the step (31-32).

At this point it seems that Emily Gosse has nothing to do with the vision; she is a fictional character in Anna's dream or fairy tale--a fair princess visiting the golden palace.

Emily's pilgrimage is momentarily arrested by "the sight of her child" (32). As Christian discovers in The Pilgrim's Progress (10), the ties of this world can distract the believer from his heavenly ambitions. Yet Emily does not stop up her ears:

She paused. Immediately the angelic hands were withdrawn into the clouds,--no longer the dark, heavy clouds of the smaller chamber, but the summer

clouds of the "large room." A basket of fruit was near her. She seemed to search amongst it for the ripest, and chose what appeared to me then a Maltese or blood orange; for it was divided down the centre, and appeared of a bright crimson colour; it may have represented a pomegranate (32).

She gave her child the polyvalent fruit--Edenic fruit, Christ's body, Persephone's pomegranate--and then she "appeared satisfied, and her angel attendants resumed their office of leading her onwards" (32). The dreamer further emphasizes Emily's passivity; she is like a blind person in the care of a "Friend who knew the way, and guided every step, to the home where she was a welcome guest" (32). The Friend led her to the very doorstep of heaven and the "chamber was crossed; she stood upon the step of the entrance, and the door gradually opened" (33). Inside there was a street

clear as crystal, bright with golden rays surpassing sunlight. On the side revealed to my sight were open galleries of most delicate tracery; these were filled with angelic forms bent in expectation towards the door; thousands of glorious beings thronged to welcome the new-comer; every head was turned toward the entrance (33).

Anna's dream ends with Emily's entrance through the door: "The unutterable peace of the pilgrim's face, as she proceeded, I have never forgotten, nor the rest which her half-closed eyes expressed" (33). The thousands of angelic forms allude to Hebrews 12:22: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." However, at the time of the dream, Emily did not know she had cancer, or suspect that she might be joining the angels in the near future. Anna believes that her dream bestowed a

species of prophetic privilege upon her: "I have often thought it intimated that this vision of her spirit-beauty, given me to behold, was as yet hidden from her eyes. Her foot was on the threshold, and then all faded from my sight" (33).

What does the dream mean? Its blend of the Biblical and the sexual can make for disconcerting reading, and it is typical of many of the scenes in Tell Jesus! in which Anna's worshipful feeling for Emily appears to be more than sisterly. As in Edmund's biographies of poets, the biographer here represents the infatuated disciple, an impassioned figure who idealizes the love object to the point of distorting her out of recognition. Anna's crush is apparent when she reproaches Emily for not spending more time alone with her. She recounts an incident in the waiting room at Pimlico:

I had Emily to my heart's content all to myself. . . . When I remarked that it was the only unbroken interview that I had ever enjoyed with her, she smiled her bright arch smile, and immediately directed my attention to the young friend whom she expected, and who was now entering the room (Shipton 62-63).

Emily's "spiritual" flirtatiousness also arouses comment from her husband:

In the course of the afternoon, as I was hanging over her, she said, "O that I loved Him more!" I replied, "You will soon." She said, "Yes, I hope so!" and with an expression approaching to archness, she added, "I don't love Satan!" (A Memorial 73).

Anna was charmed by Emily's archness. When she first met Emily, Anna watched her in "silent delight" (13) and was captivated by her "artless childlike smile", her spiritual animation, and her musical walk (16). It was adoration at



first sight: "Directly I saw the face of Mrs. Gosse, I longed to know her better: she was fair, and appeared more youthful than her years, from her small delicate features . . ." (16). Anna confesses that she "longed to keep her all to myself" (20). And when she spends the night at Emily's house once, she is "restless" and cannot sleep (36).

Considering Mrs. Gosse's emotional impact, it is not surprising that Anna would dream about her. In Anna's account of the dream in chapter three, she seems to have the "dream work" figured out. The dark chamber is the sick room, the 'large room' represents the liminal stage at the end of Emily's illness, and heaven awaits across the final threshold. But Anna could with justice have applied to herself Elihu's reproach to Job in Job 33, i.e. that visions can reveal things which reason fails to understand or acknowledge. It is possible to read into the dream a preoccupation with sexuality.

Philippe Ariès' book Western Attitudes Towards Death (1974), explains that "[at] the end of the fifteenth century, we see the themes concerning death begin to take on an erotic meaning" (56). This evolved into the "romantic death" of the nineteenth century, which could be "found in Lamartine in France, the Brontë family in England, and Mark Twain in America" (58). Death-bed scenes like one between Jane Eyre and Helen Burns, Coleridge's sexy "Life-in-Death" woman, and Lucy's awakening in a graveyard in Dracula all reinforce the connection between death and sex in the Victorian social context. In keeping with this literary tradition, Philip Gosse's sensual description of his wife's

body as a tabernacle that was consummated in the Lord resonates with the dream's emphasis on Emily's beauty, passivity, gorgeous robes, and "half-closed eyes" (Shipton 33).

Yet the Pre-Raphaelite Emily of Anna's dream contrasts with the more blatantly sexual Emily that her husband portrays in the last pages of his memoir--with her open mouth and heavy breathing. If the dream is read sensually, then the doors through which Emily passes could represent bodily thresholds or stages of arousal. Moreover, in the dream and the "Home Reached" chapter of Tell Jesus!, she is portrayed as a woman in a state of submission to her Lord.

Before Emily was clothed in her "festal" (or fetal?) robes, she wore, like Jesus, a purple robe. The purple robe was the Romans' way of mocking His claim to kingship; it emphasized His humanity and humility, but nevertheless ironically affirmed his royalty. In a similar manner, Emily's illness is what clothed her in a "heavy purple robe", and readied her to exchange it for a white heavenly one. The mortification and degradation of illness is turned into Christian honor.

The purple of the first robe foreshadows her last words to "Dear Papa", in which she tells him that the blood of the lamb has made her ready. The purple in the dream could refer to the blood which became cancerous or her menstrual blood; both make her ready for a bridegroom. Furthermore, Philip's use of the word "labor" is possibly suggestive. When she says that she wants to linger on earth longer to be with him, he interprets it as "only a phase of "labouring

for the Lord"" (A Memorial 69), a labor which in turn could be interpreted sexually.

Edmund was the fruit of her labor for Philip, and in the dream, she offers him a "Maltese or blood orange" or pomegranate which was the "ripest" of a basket of fruit (32). Only after she has given him the fruit is she free to pursue her course towards heaven. Does the blood in the fruit represent the blood of her womb, of the child himself, or Christ's sacrifice? The allusions seem to be both classical and Biblical. Reading the dream in Oedipal terms, her offering could be interpreted as a final consummation before death; after her son receives the fruit, "Emily appeared satisfied" (32). She becomes Eve to his Adam.

For the waking Anna, the blood orange represents the fruit of the Gospel and the spirit. But what might it signify when she left piety and respectability behind in sleep? It is possible that she saw herself as Emily's child as well as her lover, in which case the "fruit" would be offered to her. In Tell Jesus!, she tells how she was "fed" by Emily's words of spiritual wisdom (Shipton 16)<sup>24</sup>, the same words which came to make Edmund feel nauseated in Father and Son.

In turn, Anna would like to "feed" the reader with the story of Emily's life. Yet her motives, although perhaps unconscious, are not as pure as she claims. Just as she wanted Emily to all to herself, so she wanted to define the meaning of her life and death on her own terms. This is why the author of Tell Jesus! found the 1835 journal so disturbing; it spoke with Emily's voice and offered a

glimpse into her past life that did not correspond to Anna's vision of her present one. Thus, the "Recollections" undermined Anna's version of the book of Emily.

Anna's memoir fails to mention the sin of story-telling--the sin which so "easily beset" her friend--and she does not leave her own biographical narrative open to the same kind of moral scrutiny. Yet if there is "sin" in writing, there is plenty to be found in Tell Jesus!. By appropriating the unspeakable suffering of her friend for tropological and literary purposes, she betrays what she ostensibly tries to commemorate. By making Emily's story conform to her own evangelical and didactic purposes, she lies to her readers by disguising the subtext of her sexual and literary designs on Emily. Philip and Anna's typological practices illustrate both the creative and coercive sides of typology. In Tell Jesus! and A Memorial, poetic and sensual license join hands with typology to create a fictional Christ in Emily's form. Anna's biographical practices in particular foreshadow Edmund's; like Anna, he exploits the subjects of his biographies by abrogating the authority to define them on his own "literary" terms.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Preoccupation with the reader's soul is one of the main elements which differentiates a text like Tell Jesus! from Emily's "Recollections".

<sup>2</sup> As an appendix to Tell Jesus!, the reader is allowed to see the book in action on an American railway carriage, where Shipton "overhears" a conversation between a preacher and his fellow passenger. The following passage serves as a species of spiritual advertisement for Shipton's book. The preacher testifies: "I was greatly edified and instructed, as I went with absorbing interest through the pages of this little volume. I read the experience of one who made it her daily business to tell Jesus, with a loving, trusting spirit, all her wants . . ." (Shipton 112). Thus the preacher further bolsters the authority of the "little volume", and his witness on the train eventually convinces the sceptical passenger (who serves as a type of the careless scoffer).

<sup>3</sup> Edmund confirms the statements of Anna Shipton in Father and Son: "It was insisted on in our household that if anything was desired, you should not, as my Mother said, 'lose any time in seeking for it, but ask God to guide you to it' (63-64). Edmund further explains that his Mother "put forth, with unflinching directness, in her published writings" the philosophy that

'Whatever you need, tell Him and He will grant it, if it is His will.' Very well; I had need of a large painted humming-top which I had seen in a shop-window in the Caledonian Road (64).

When the propriety of praying for a painted top was questioned, Edmund's parents were put into difficulty. Emily "had gone so far as to say publicly that no 'things or circumstances are too insignificant to bring before the God of the whole earth'" (F&S 64). Philip Gosse did not take this view to the same extreme, just as he was not entirely convinced about the sin of fiction (170), but "I am not sure that she was convinced that I ought to have been checked" (64). Philip, on the other hand "could not help seeing that it reduced their favourite theory to an absurdity for a small child to exercise the privilege" (64). Edmund subverts their theological beliefs through an imitation of them that shades into parody, a pattern which becomes a familiar one in Father and Son.

<sup>4</sup> As Edmund observes in Father and Son, the question of painfulness was an especially serious matter in light of the fact that the science of anesthesia was not very advanced at that time (75).

<sup>5</sup> Emily took opium, a "preparation know as Battley's sedative" (A Memorial 31).

<sup>6</sup> In Mark Rutherford's Deliverance, Rutherford also discovered the glory of God's love in Woman (138).

<sup>7</sup> Like her husband and son, Emily Gosse was a prolific writer. Philip details her literary output: "During the twelvemonth between November, 1855, and November, 1856, seventeen Gospel Tracts of hers were published by the Weekly Tract Society, in addition to fourteen of hers already in their catalogue; and five more were printed between the latter date and her death, which have been published posthumously. This was besides many papers in the British Messenger, Monthly Messenger, Mother's Friend, British Flag, Christian Weekly News, and other periodicals" (A Memorial 4).

<sup>8</sup> Anna draws attention to the autobiographical nature of Emily's tracts: "most of the striking anecdotes related in her tracts came under their notice through [Philip's] visitations; others occurred to herself, and all were true" (Shipton 94). Anna claims for the tracts the same veracity and credibility as the Bible. And Edmund Gosse made similar claims in his preface to Father and Son (33). Furthermore, as a biographer he was often accused of being anecdotal and overly autobiographical, and in this sense, the tracts offer a possible ancestor to his biographies of contemporary poets. They also offer a source for the autobiographical talent that is manifest in Father and Son.

<sup>9</sup> One of Emily's tracts, "The Bathing-Woman and the Visitor," reconstructs a conversation between the author and a bathing-woman. Emily shows sympathy for the working conditions of the poorly paid bathing-women, whose job it was to assist the bathers who used the bathing machines. Philip Gosse's Tenby: A Sea-side Holiday (1856) provides a contemporary description of the bathing-women: "In the midst of the crowd stand a dozen of white bathing-machines, and the busy bathing-women--uncouth, uncorsetted figures--in blue serge gowns with a fringe of rags below, are moving to and fro; while far off, within the verge of the breaking sea . . . one of these brawny priestesses of Neptune [offers] a sacrifice to her divinity, in the shape of a slender figure with long sable robe and dishevelled hair" (12-13).

<sup>10</sup> The parable is "literary" in that it tells a story and resembles a fairy tale, with its King and peasant girl and palace.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Gosse also saw his wife as an angel, but his description is more straightforward: "Among the patients who crowded the waiting room at Dr. F--'s, she moved like a ministering angel" (A Memorial 37).

<sup>12</sup> As noted earlier, this exhortation was based on 1 John 1:7, a central text for Emily's theological and pastoral system.

<sup>13</sup> The importance of the name of Jesus is also emphasized in an early letter from Philip to Edmund (document #9b in CUL Manuscript Room's copy of The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse Vol. I). This letter is quoted in chapter two.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Henry explains: "I have no doubt she alluded to a deficiency which she had always regretted; from the want of ear and voice, she had never been able to sing" (A Memorial 73) This could be the source of Edmund's later indifference to music, as documented in Thwaite's biography (212).

<sup>15</sup> In Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology (1990), Michael Wheeler describes some of these "published descriptions of Victorian death-beds". He outlines the general character of Victorian death-bed conventions, some of which include: "the visit from a doctor or priest, the presence of a loving attendant to whom a dying confession could be made or of a family on whom a dying blessing could be bestowed, the laying out of a corpse in a darkened room, the 'last visit' of the bereaved, and the closing of the coffin" (27).

<sup>16</sup> A letter dated August 2, 1850 provides an earlier example of Philip Gosse's association of his wife with "the old worthies": "I read the antediluvian Elders this morning in Heb. xi and thought of you, and prayed heartily for you, both at getting up, and also at the hour when we usually pray together" (document #35 pasted in CUL Rare Books' copy of The Life of PHG).

<sup>17</sup> Yet the eulogizing effects of her biographers are undermined by Emily herself. Her dying words overturn and subvert the conventional text of Deuteronomy 34, as well as A Memorial and Tell Jesus!--thus challenging the "true believer" image which her biographers so earnestly try to present. Emily turns the Pisgah View upside down when she says: "The Lord has hitherto raised me up above circumstances: He has made me to ride upon the high places of the earth, and now He has brought me down; and now He has made me to fear" (A Memorial 74).

<sup>18</sup> The following is an example of what was censored: "When the incisions had reached the depth of about an inch and a quarter, the operator announced that he had reached the bottom of the cancer. He now scored no more, but applied a "girdle," or . . . plaister, around the line where the killed tumour adjoined the living flesh; a line which was marked with perfect definiteness. The object was now to promote a suppuration, whereby the tumour should be gradually detached from the flesh, and sloughed off, like a stone dropped out of a basin. It was nearly four weeks after the removal of the skin that the "girdle" was first put on, and two weeks more before the tumour came away. A furrow, gradually deepening, formed between the living flesh and the hard and black tumour, and this was filled with pus. The sensation now became that of a heavy weight dragging at the breast, and this feeling increased as the connexion between the parts daily diminished. At length, on Sunday, the 23d of November, to our delight, the great insensible tumour fell out of its cavity . . . and the breast was relieved of its load--the dead body that it had so long carried about./There it lay on the table . . . resembling in

size and shape a penny bun . . . " (A Memorial 32-33). Philip's graphic honesty subverts conventional death-bed "fictions".

<sup>19</sup> The death-bed scene in Father and Son is also altered to suit the narrative needs of the writer. It will be examined in more detail in chapter six, but it might be helpful to mention at this point that the only dying words which Edmund includes in his description are the ones that apply directly to him: "I shall walk with Him in white. Won't you take our lamb and walk with me?" (F&S 81). However, A Memorial records at least six more sets of Emily's dying words.

<sup>20</sup> The Only Problem (1984) is the title of Muriel Spark's novel about the book of Job.

<sup>21</sup> Years later, it did not comfort a member of one of Philip's congregation in Devon, when he told her that she broke her leg "because she had made an idol of her husband, and he reduced the poor thing to tears by standing at her bed-side and imploring the Holy Spirit to bring this sin home to her conscience" (F&S 225).

<sup>22</sup> A comparison might be made between Anna's reading of Emily's life from her tombstone and Pip's reading of the story of his family in Great Expectations (1). And after Emily's death, Anna becomes a type of the spiritual orphan.

<sup>23</sup> A parallel relationship can be found in Father and Son, where Edmund plays Elihu to his father's Job (243).

<sup>24</sup> Here, Anna seems to imitate Augustine's oral relationship to God in the Confessions. For example, Augustine writes: "I heard your voice calling from on high, saying 'I am the food of full-grown men. Grow and you shall feed on me'" (147).



Chapter four  
The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.

Between the years 1879 and 1925, Edmund Gosse wrote twelve full-length biographies in addition to numerous short memoirs and biographical essays, often combining biographical narrative with literary criticism. Gosse's biographical corpus--containing biography proper and essays about the art of biography--comprises more than a third of his total literary production. The preferred subjects for his biographies were poets, but Edmund broadened the definition of poet to include his father in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (1890), which was published two years after Philip died. This book can be assimilated into the community of poets' biographies that Edmund Gosse wrote, in that the father as scientist is nevertheless also seen as a poetic figure who writes "romances" of natural history, thus apparently contradicting Edmund's claim that his father was unimaginative.

This chapter takes The Life as its central text and examines its role as precursor to Father and Son, which was published seventeen years later in 1907. In the first story, the father is larger than life and the son is present only in the shadowy form of author and minor character. The biography becomes the forerunner to the autobiography of the son, where shadow becomes flesh and servant becomes master. Just as the "Recollections" are related typologically to Father and Son, so also The Life provides another textual precedent for Edmund's autobiography. The typological and fictional characteristics of The Life will be studied,

primarily in the context of a comparison with Father and Son, although the chapter also seeks to see the relationships between the memorials of Emily and the son's biography, as well as between other biographies of literary figures that Gosse wrote.

The main reason for studying Philip's biography is to better understand the autobiography which emerged from it, a literary evolution which offers a parallel to the way in which Edmund's "poetics" are dependant upon and emerge from his father's Biblical and literary "poetics". The fact that The Life was Father and Son's textual antecedent further illustrates Edmund's "literary" dependence upon his father; the son's typological and "poetic" autobiography is impossible without the biographical story of the father. Moreover, The Life also offers an isolated example of the biographer as "literary" typologist in the sense that Edmund created a literary type of his father to serve as a forerunner to himself as antitype. Both the father in the biography and the father in the autobiography are the product of Edmund's literary reconstructions, but the "poetic" version of his father in The Life seems more accurate and representative than the narrow, one-dimensional Philistine Edmund described (and distorted) in Father and Son.

Edmund employs typological methods in order to create a literary "type" in the form of Philip Gosse, and the former also makes use of his tropological training when he reads himself into his father's story. In Edmund's hands (as in Anna Shipton's), biography becomes veiled autobiography,

especially when he introduces his own recollections into the narrative. Moreover, like Shipton, Edmund takes poetic liberties with the subject of his memoir, demonstrating that he is capable of adopting the same authoritative relationship to the subject under interpretation which the system of typology encourages.

Ironically, Edmund makes use of the coercive side of typology, the very feature that he resented when it was applied to himself. He creates a series of fathers--Biblical, mythological, and "poetic"--and claims the same "artistic" freedom to shape one's subject matter which was demanded by Philip and Anna in relation to Emily. Here, the typological and tropological practitioner is in essence a biographer, using Biblical models as a means of creating and enforcing identity. In The Life, Edmund turns his typological training against his father, using the methods he was taught in order to define Philip on his own terms. Yet here the "poetic" father he creates emerges as a more imaginative and sympathetic figure than Edmund allowed him to be in Father and Son.

#### I. Biographical Outline of Philip Gosse.

Before embarking on an examination of the theoretical issues that arise from a close-reading of the text of The Life, an outline of the biographical events recorded in this book might be helpful. Edmund's main source for the early history of his father is an unpublished manuscript by Philip entitled My Life, which is now in the Cambridge University

Library Manuscript Room. Edmund follows the text of this work fairly closely.

Born in 1810, Philip Gosse was the second son of Thomas Gosse, a wandering miniature painter, and Hannah Best "who occupied an ambiguous position, half lady's-maid, half companion" to a certain Green family (The Life of PHG 3). In the early years of Philip's childhood, his mother settled in Poole, Dorset and raised her three sons and daughter there, but his father returned to Poole from his work-related "perambulations" (3) very infrequently. The family worshipped in the Independent Chapel (361) and Philip was "brought up in the old Puritan school (356), an upbringing which emphasized daily Bible study (31).

As an adolescent and young man, Philip Gosse worked in Newfoundland, Canada, and Alabama at such varied occupations as clerk, farmer, and school-master, though all the while observing and recording the habits of insects and animals, a passion which was to evolve into a distinguished career in natural history and the publication of popular scientific books. Poor health and a feeling of disgust at the abuses of slavery in Alabama drove him back to England, but in 1844 he crossed the Atlantic again, this time to Jamaica at the request of the British Museum. There, he collected birds, insects, and plants to send back home. The notes he took eventually became A Naturalist's Sojourn in Jamaica (1851), one of his most popular books.

When he returned to England, he settled in London and embarked on a literary career, writing books about natural history (and a few on religious topics), for which he

received recognition from the scientific community and the wider public. On 22 November 1848, Philip married Emily Bowes, whose biography has been outlined in previous chapters, and a year later she gave birth to Edmund. The couple had become acquainted through their membership of the Plymouth Brethren community in Hackney, which Philip had joined after a long period of association with Wesleyism. He and his wife shared a love of poetry and scriptural exegesis, as well as a determination to bring up their son in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord". Not long after Emily's death in 1857, Gosse moved his small household to St. Marychurch, Devonshire, where he remained for the rest of his life. There he collected zoological specimens by the seashore, kept an aquarium, and continued to write books until 1865.

A book which is central both in terms of Philip's career and his psychological profile is Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot (1857). According to Edmund, the ambitious task of Omphalos was to demonstrate that:

the contents of the fossiliferous strata did not prove any process of cosmic formation which the six literal days of Genesis might not have covered. He proposed to reconcile geology not merely to the Mosaic record, but to an exact and inelastic interpretation of it (The Life of PHG 277-78).

The author of Omphalos created an ingenious theory to reconcile evolutionary science with Genesis. As Philip perceived it, the Law or "secret current" which everybody had been overlooking in the fossil debate was that of prochronism. Distinguishing prochronic or ideal time from diachronic or "real" historical time, Gosse argued that what

seems like evidence in organisms and the rocks of gradual development and change over very long periods of time could be false. It would be false in the sense that the existence of fossil evidence is attributed to the wrong sort of time, i.e. diachronic. Here, Philip reads time "allegorically", on two levels at once. His is a poet's vision, thus undermining Edmund's charges against Omphalos's "inelastic" and "literal" interpretations (which are in keeping with Edmund's over-all evaluation of his father's intellect).

However "poetic" it may be, the division into diachronic and prochronic time does not solve all the difficulties posed by the "geological knot". For instance, why would physical evidence seem to be providing clues concerning one of the earth's earliest eras, if that "era" never existed diachronically or in "real" time? Omphalos responds to these questions with the "Life is a Circle" argument, which complements the author's discussion of the Law of Prochronism:

It is evident that there is no one point in the history of any single creature, which is a legitimate beginning of existence . . . the life of every organic being is whirling in a ceaseless circle, to which one knows not how to assign any commencement (Omphalos 122).

Edmund summarizes his father's argument in Father and Son:

any breach in the circular course of nature could be conceived only on the supposition that the object created bore false witness to past processes, which had never taken place. For instance, Adam would certainly possess hair and teeth and bones in a condition which it must have taken many years to accomplish, yet he was created full-grown yesterday. He would certainly . . . display an 'omphalos', yet no umbilical cord had ever attached him to a mother (104).

Yet Philip did not perceive the "false witness" of an omphalos to be a damning indictment of God; rather, it merely testifies to a glorious part of God's plan for creation which He never actually carried out. In Philip's book, the fact that Adam's navel belongs to a prochronic era does not make God a liar.

Despite the author's high expectations, the reception of Omphalos turned out to be nearly as negative as that of A Memorial. Edmund writes:

In the course of that dismal winter, as the post began to bring in private letters, few and chilly, and public reviews, many and scornful, my Father looked in vain for the approval of the churches, and in vain for the acquiescence of the scientific societies (F&S 105).

Edmund fancied that it was at this time that his father "began, in his depression, to be angry with God" (106), an assessment with which Thwaite concurs in Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape (36-37): "A few copies were certainly sold; but most were destroyed. . . . It was Omphalos, as much as Emily's death, that hardened Philip's heart and drove him into rigid patterns of fanaticism and fear" (37). Philip's depression over his wife's death is foreshadowed in a letter to Emily from the early 1850's: "What a blank would the fairest scenes on earth be without your dear presence!" (document #43 pasted in CUL Rare Books' copy of The Life of PHG).

Yet the move from London to the "fair scenes" of Devon in 1857 eventually facilitated an improvement in Philip's spirits:

He lost his morbid depression; he resumed his own proper work of observation with enthusiasm; and he started what is admitted to be the most serious and

the most durable of his contributions to scientific literature (The Life of PHG 283-84).

After Philip recovered his literary feet, he published Actinologia Britannica (1860) and The Romance of Natural History (1860), only to end his literary career in 1865, when he no longer needed to support himself by his literary endeavors. Meanwhile, Philip assumed pastoral and preaching duties for the small local community of Brethren. In December 1860, he married Eliza Brightwen, a former Quaker who became a close ally of Edmund. She wrote an appendix to The Life of Philip Henry Gosse after her husband died in 1888, praising him as one who was living proof "that it is possible to be a man of science and yet to be a devout believer in the inspired Word of God" (374).

## II. Death of the Father.

Father and Son does not record Philip Henry's death, as its narrative stops when Edmund goes away to London in 1867, at which point the father is alive and as active as ever with his "postal inquisition" (F&S 236) and tormenting exhortations to read the Bible. It is to The Life that we must turn for details of Philip's death, although Edmund does not dwell on the particulars with anything like the exactitude and exhaustiveness that Philip himself did in his descriptions of Emily's illness and death in A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse. As in the pages of Tell Jesus!, the "harrowing" side of death is censored. In



fact, Edmund devotes little more than a page to the description of the events leading up to his father's death.

Philip was "examining the heavens" one cold night in 1887 with a telescope and "a newly purchased portion of the telescope apparatus became dislodged and fell into the garden". This agitated the elderly astronomer and "some exposure in leaning out to see where the lens had fallen, brought on an attack of bronchitis, and although this particular complaint was overcome, he was never well again" (323). Yet it seemed that he was recovering pretty well at first:

All went on much in the old style until March, 1888, when a disease of the heart, which must for a long while past have been latent, rather suddenly made itself apparent. Under the repeated attacks of this complaint, his brain, his spirits, his manifold resources of body and mind, sank lower and lower, and the five months which followed were a period of great weariness and almost unbroken gloom. After a long and slow decay, the sadness of which was happily not embittered by actual pain, he ceased to breathe, in his sleep, without a struggle, at a few minutes before one o'clock on the morning of August 23, 1888. He had lived seventy-eight years . . . . He was buried, near his mother, in the Torquay Cemetery, attended to the grave by a large congregation of those who had known and respected him during his thirty years' residence in the neighbourhood (323).

The tone of this passage is respectful yet detached; it gives the facts without religious or typological embellishment. Unlike Emily, Philip's tabernacle is never consummated, nor does he await the resurrection of the Lord. He simply "ceases to breathe" and is buried. Philip Gosse and Anna Shipton were able to expand the narrative of Emily's sickness and death so that it constituted one short book each. Edmund condenses and minimizes the details of his father's last five months and final hours to such an

extent that they only occupy a paragraph<sup>1</sup>. Eliza's version of her husband's death, as recorded in an appendix to The Life, writes the religious dimension back into the story. She has him passing "in his sleep to be with his expected Lord" (372). Her version is also a little less peaceful: "He was very restless nearly the whole of that night, but towards midnight he became quiet. To the nurse who was with him he said, "It is all over. The Lord is near! I am going to my reward!" (372).

The sparseness of the prose in Edmund's death scene conceals his emotions--which are carefully restrained--and a good deal of what actually occurred in Philip's final hours. If the son refused to read death in typological terms, Philip himself made no such omissions. Although her source does not admit to being based on any written document, Ann Thwaite records a very different death than the ones described in The Life--more violent, more blasphemous:

the final hours were the hardest of all. At the time Edmund and Nellie said nothing to anyone but in 1927, near his own death, Edmund told Harold Nicolson of the terrible last hours on earth of Philip Henry Gosse, as at the end he turned against his God, reviling Him for treachery. The son and his calm strong wife knew that the father had lived his life in false hope and a faith that could not be rewarded on earth. They knew, though he had amazingly denied the knowledge, that he must die like everyone else. And they wept with him as he shouted blasphemies and asked his God why He had forsaken him. Through the long dark hours, as August 22nd became the 23rd, they struggled to hold him down (Thwaite 315-316).

The passage blatantly contradicts Edmund's assertion that Philip died "in his sleep, without a struggle". Edmund's description in The Life does not give the impression that there were other people present at Philip's death-bed, much

less that they needed to physically hold him down. He lies about his father's death in the same way that Anna Shipton lied about Emily's--censoring the uncomfortable details. As with the story of Emily's death, none of the three versions--Eliza's, Edmund's, Thwaite's--match up on all accounts. One asserts that he died in his sleep, another that he struggled. The number at his bedside is not consistent; in one version there is nobody, in another a nurse, and in yet another the son and his wife. A parallel could be drawn with the inconsistencies from gospel to gospel over the number of witnesses at Jesus' tomb (although Edmund did not conceive of it in these terms in The Life).

That Edmund finally told the true story near his own death might suggest that he never really freed himself from the typological Father. Philip's rebellious death haunts him forty years later, upstaging Edmund even in the role of rebel, for how could he be more blasphemous than his father when he shouted to God that he had forsaken him? Philip makes a more dramatic exit than Edmund achieves at the end of Father and Son, and Edmund's typological reversals seem bland in comparison to the powerful and terrible old man cursing God on his deathbed.

Yet the son did defy Victorian mourning conventions. Thwaite describes how "one of the 'saints' fixed her eye upon the family. 'I fancy she thinks we are not sorry enough,' Edmund thought". And he deemed his wife's mourning bill "'a marvel of cheapness'" (Thwaite 317). There were other clues that implicated the son in the sin of disrespect to the father: "There was no formal mourning. Edmund was

dining with the Thornycrofts in London only a week after his father's death, and next day winning a shilling at bezique and two shillings at whist . . ." (Thwaite 318).

Philip's death afforded his son a literary opportunity:

Almost immediately he began work on The Life of Philip Henry Gosse F.R.S. . . . One of the difficulties was the widow. At Marychurch, in July 1890, the proofs were arriving and Edmund wrote despairingly to Nellie: ' . . . what a time I have been having of it--not unfriendly at all . . . but dense, suspicious, blunt, confusing and confused. Each sentence misunderstood . . . ' (Thwaite 318)<sup>2</sup>.

Edmund discovered that the question of how a person is to be represented is a contentious one; it is especially difficult to negotiate between two potential "writers" with different interests and agendas.

### III.i. Reception of "The Life" and George Moore's Suggestion to Turn the Biography into an Autobiography.

The idea to write Father and Son came from two readers of The Life, George Moore and J.A. Symonds; both men were friends of the author who responded warmly to the book (in contrast to the shocked and disgusted readers of The Memorial). They felt that the story of the relationship between father and son--shadowed forth but not embodied in the 1890 biography--was waiting to be written. Thwaite records:

Reading the Life, John Addington Symonds wrote:  
'I wish there were more of you in your Father's Life. You could write a fascinating autobiography if you chose; and I hope you will do this' (319).

Ironically, it is the father's story which inspires Father and Son, the very book which denies that Philip was capable of imaginative inspiration.

George Moore was even more enthusiastic than Symonds in his encouragement of Gosse: "Moore glimpsed in that book [The Life] the great unwritten story of the relationship between father and son" (Thwaite 319). As Evan Charteris records in The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse (1931): "one morning early in the 'nineties Mr. Moore was reading Gosse's Life of his father which had recently appeared. It flashed on him that at the back of what he was reading lay a subject of greater interest" (307-308). Moore then hastened to National Club, where Gosse usually ate lunch. Gosse asked his friend if he had come for lunch and Moore replied:

"No, but I've come to tell you that all the morning I've been reading your Life of your father and I could not wait before letting you know how much I

liked your book. . . . I admire your book . . . for itself, and still more for the book it has revealed to me, but I missed the child, I missed your father's life and your life as you lived it together--a great psychological work waits to be written--your father's influence on you and your influence on him . . . and as a background for this great story you will have the Plymouth Brethren . . . ." (Charteris 308).

Edmund liked the suggestion, but worried about the fact that many of the potential characters were still alive (309). He was also concerned that his friend was "asking me in the sunset of my days to write a book no one will read" (309). Yet Moore insisted that "it is a great subject and cannot fail to find thousands of readers" (309). Concerning the problematic sensibilities of living relatives and friends (something Gosse himself officially advised biographers not to be too concerned about), Moore assured him that "your record will be full of sympathy--there will be no reproach . . . ." (309). Yet this assurance was partially false, as many reviewers reproached Gosse for dissecting his father's character with an unfilial spirit. Criticism of Father and Son was foreshadowed in a review of Edmund's 1890 biography in The Saturday Review of 3 January 1891. The article praises Edmund's honesty in general, but disapproved of the son's detailed portrayal of the father's early poverty: "To speak of the vicissitudes of this period were perhaps scarcely correct" (18).

Moore continued to reassure and encourage Gosse, and so persistent was the former's help and advice that Gosse was later accused of merely sharing the authorship of Father and Son<sup>3</sup>. However, Charles Burkhardt's article "George Moore and

Father and Son" in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (1960-61)

refutes this accusation. Burkhart contests that

the unpublished Moore-Gosse letters seem to show that

Moore's assistance largely consisted of prodding Gosse into writing the book, that specific suggestions made by Moore were apparently rejected by Gosse, and that one cannot credit Moore with any important share in what is, today, Gosse's most widely read work (73).

Burkhart further explains that "the only technical assistance that Moore mentions in his account [to Charteris] is his advice to write the narrative in the first person, advice which Gosse accepted" (73).

Moore repeats the luncheon suggestion in written form in a letter dated Nov. 28, 1896, which is now in the Brotherton Collection, Leeds:

Ever since I read 'Kit Kats' I have hoped from time to time that you would find a subject, an outlet for the fine appreciations of human characteristics which distinguished that book. I am convinced that your biography of your father furnished the required subject, you will not find a better if you search the world over; you seemed to think so the other day and I hope that nothing will happen to change you. You said you would like to read it to me as you wrote it; I shall be very glad if you will. . . . I am sure you will achieve fame and popularity with the book. Everything is to hand--nothing can stop you if your courage does not fail you. I can say no more . . . I hope. (Autograph Letters of George Moore to Sir Edmund Gosse: 1887-1927. Brotherton Collection, Leeds)<sup>4</sup>.

Gosse's Critical Kit-Kats was published in 1896, along with the second edition of the biography of Philip Gosse, entitled The Naturalist of the Sea Shore. The 1896 edition might have been the one which Moore read and became excited about (see note #4). Without Moore's "prodding", it is possible that Gosse's autobiography would never have been written<sup>5</sup>, but that is not the same as saying that Moore

actually helped Gosse to write it. By drawing attention to the autobiographical potential in The Life, Moore offered his friend a mirror which showed him how he could enlarge the image of himself and deepen the perspective on the figures of father and son. Yet it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the necessary antecedent to Father and Son is Philip's biography. The earlier biography is more seminal to the creation of Edmund's autobiography than a lunch-time conversation.

The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. provides the story of the first character in the title of Edmund's autobiography, the Biblical Father, yet the man in the 1890 biography is less a father and more of an official person: traveller, scientist, author, F.R.S.. According to Brooks-Davies' Fielding, Dickens, Gosse, Iris Murdoch and Oedipal Hamlet, "[it] appears that Gosse could write his autobiography only after he had performed his filial last rites by presenting to the public an official biography of his father as a formal act of remembrance" (115). Having done his duty as a son and servant in the 1890 book, Edmund can more legitimately focus on his own story in Father and Son.

As the title suggests, The Life is more official, more concerned with the externals of Philip's life: his career, his achievements, his publications. It also provides more biographical coverage of the adult Philip than the child, in contrast to Father and Son, which ends when Edmund is in his twenties. The biography, with its attention to public roles, clears the ground for a more inward-looking narrative



in the form of an autobiography. As Edmund explains in chapter one of Father and Son:

It is not my business here to re-write the biographies of my parents. Each of them became, in a certain measure, celebrated. . . . But this is not another memoir of public individuals, each of whom has had more than one biographer. My serious duty . . . is other; 'that's the world's side,/Thus men saw them, praised them, thought they knew them! . . .' But this is a different inspection, this is a study of 'the other side, the novel/Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,' the record of a state of soul once not uncommon in Protestant Europe, of which my parents were perhaps the latest consistent exemplars . . . (42-43).

The purpose of Edmund's autobiography is to go beneath the surface of the biographies and try to write about the private face, even the soul, of his parents. The word duty<sup>6</sup> surfaces in the passage above, and the professed spirit of the autobiography is further made solemn by the quotation from Browning's poem 'One Word More'. The parents safely biographized, the son has an excuse to embark on a more subjective and possibly "fictional" project. Here, the writing of The Life could be a way of cashing in on Edmund's literary inheritance early, getting his father "out of the way" in order to claim the right to tell his own story (as well as the father's) and construct an acceptable "literary" inheritance for himself in contrast to the Biblical inheritance portrayed in Father and Son. Here, "the darks undreamed of" are present in the earlier, ostensibly more public book as well. These "darks" represent the dark and coercive side of typological and tropological hermeneutics--Edmund stealing the right to "create" his parents after his own fashion.

III.ii. Comparison of Edmund Gosse as Biographer and Autobiographer: The Relationship between "The Life of Philip Henry Gosse" and "Father and Son".

Why did Edmund Gosse essentially write two biographies of his father, one with the son taking backseat to the paternal figure, the other with the son at center stage? And why did he write numerous other biographies which offer additional father-portraits? I would argue that Gosse multiplied his fathers in a series of biographical enterprises in order to register his dissatisfaction with the "Biblical" father of his childhood. A comparison of the father in The Life with the one in Father and Son shows a marked contrast, with the first father emerging as primarily a scientist and writer, and the second as a patriarchal or typologically-patterned figure. Edmund is not so much writing a Gossepel in The Life, as a literary history which forcefully establishes his own inheritance within a poetic and mythic rather than Biblical tradition. Thus, Edmund translates Biblical typology into literary typology.

The reviewer of The Life in The Saturday Review perceives something "Wordsworthian, something of poetic exaltation" in Philip's "attitude towards nature" (18), and the writer of Philip's obituary in The Academy of September 1, 1888 believes Edmund "inherited his father's literary ardour" (141). Yet the literary son was threatened by the Christian ardour of the father, and The Life discusses the latter's religious characteristics and beliefs with reluctance. On the other hand, the oppressiveness of Philip and Emily's

theology and the yoke of Edmund's dedication provide the central conflicts of Father and Son.

Edmund refuses to let The Life run riot with typological comparisons. By robbing his father of his own cherished status as typological imitator, he "cleanses" his inheritance of the religious bonds which (he perceived) restricted his growth as an artist. Yet in doing so, he imitates biographical "liars" like Shipton who remained within the typological tradition Edmund rejected. Edmund imitated typology's flexible framework for reading identity, but refused to read his Father in strictly Biblical terms. The preferred father is scientific and poetic, a less threatening figure than the Biblical version. The Philip Henry who took his son on zoological excursions to the seaside--an almost pagan figure<sup>a</sup>--is less frightening:

My father was at his very best on these delightful excursions. . . . Extremely serious all the time, with his brows a little knitted, he was nevertheless not at all formidable here, as he so often was at home. His broad face, blanched with emotion, as he arranged his little lens to bear in proper focus on a peopled eminence of wet rock, had no such terrors for me as it sometimes had when it rose, burdened with prophecy, from the pages of some book of exhortation. The excitement in the former case was one which I could share . . . (The Life 288-89).

Philip as formidable and terrible prophet is humanized by his scientific pursuits and it is the human father that Edmund feels happiest claiming. By choosing the scientist over the prophet, Edmund constructs a secular and literary heritage for himself in the pages of his father's biography, thus writing "fiction" where he claims to be writing objective biography.

Father and son are "switched at birth" in the text of The Life, Edmund becoming the authoritative "father" and Philip the literary son. Thus Edmund disinherits the Biblical fathers-- Elkanah, Elijah, Job, and Simeon--which Philip internalizes and impersonates in the pages of Father and Son. The Life, although it is the earlier book, seems to liberate Father and Son from the theological bondage under which it labored. The young Edmund suffered from the weight of a Biblical inheritance that sought to entrap him into assuming a particular typological identity. In response to this burden, the composition of The Life was as much an attempt to "throw off his yoke" as Father and Son. By disinheriting his father from a Biblical tradition, Edmund clears the ground for his own disinheritance and deconversion (after having first occupied the space with typological identities he chose in opposition to the Samuel character). Edmund tries to define his father on his own terms--be they Biblical or poetic--and thus he does unto his father what was done to him.

Edmund tries, albeit with questionable success, to be as strong a "writer" of his father's life as Philip and Emily were in relation to their son's biography. Moreover, Edmund frequently sneaks his own stories into the narrative of his biographies, and in The Life the figure of the son is ghostly yet persistent. True to the self-abnegation that biography requires, Edmund is eclipsed in The Life--in Moore's words "I missed the child"--and his voice is for the most part suppressed. Just as in childhood, when Edmund's identity was engulfed by his father, so his autobiography is

muffled in the biography of the father. But it is nevertheless present. As will be discussed in the next chapter, one of the criticisms of Gosse as a biographer was his propensity to "put himself forward" (Thwaite 415), and introduce too many autobiographical elements into his narrative. The autobiographical passages in The Life will receive more attention in section seven of the present chapter, but at this juncture suffice it to say that Edmund does not allow himself to be completely submerged in the biography. This is what made it possible for readers like Symonds and Moore to see the son's "unwritten story" beneath the surface of the story of Philip Gosse.

However, despite Edmund's powerful role as author, his words are often interrupted by quotations from his father's writings, raising the sensitive question of how far the biographer can be classified as a creative writer. Moreover, as noted in section one, the early chapters of The Life are based upon Philip's unpublished manuscript, My Life (CUL Manuscript Room). The "imitative faculty" which Edmund exercised in childhood is here revived and used to resurrect the words of the father. Ironically, Edmund must "plagiarize" his father's literature in order to assert himself as an independent writer and "author" of his father's life. In doing so, he repeats childhood performances, in particular the experience of writing a monograph about sea-creatures in imitation of Philip: "The subject did not lend itself to any flow of language, and I was obliged incessantly to borrow sentences, word for word, from my Father's published books" (F&S 147). Edmund wrote

and illustrated the monograph when he was ten, but thirty years later he is still borrowing his father's sentences, this time for the purpose of writing a book about Philip himself instead of his creatures.

#### IV. The Possible Moral Dubiousness of the Son as Biographer.

The same moral difficulties that some of the reviewers of Father and Son recognized--the "fitness" of the son to question and dissect the character of his father--could apply to The Life of Philip Henry Gosse. Does Edmund have the right to write the story of his father's life when it is the latter who "authored" Edmund first? His parents were the ones who wrote a script for him in the form of the story of Samuel and the child-rearing manual Abraham and His Children. By pirating the copyright to his father's life in the same way the father reserved "authorial" rights over Edmund, the author of the Life gets his own back in the way he has been taught, through writing. He even goes a step further and becomes Philip's literary critic, criticizing the father's acts of writing. Edmund is not just a harmless man of letters gossiping in his library, but a damning critic of the texts which were sacred to Philip Gosse: the Bible and the proposed Biblical "script" of his son's life. To criticize these texts is to criticize the foundation of the father's life.

Yet in taking upon himself the role of literary commentator, Edmund could be admitting his own failure as a independent creative artist--doomed to observe and analyse

but never to create himself. In this sense, Philip ultimately emerges as a commanding literary figure in his own right who threatens the artistic potency of the son (here, the "poetic" father is as threatening as the Biblical one). Edmund often adopts a condescending tone when he describes the literary efforts of his father, but this tone might conceal a fundamental jealousy of the latter's generative power. Father and Son also stresses his parent's lack of "sympathetic imagination" (78), but I would argue that this is a distorted representation, one which The Life itself belies. This book celebrates the father as a writer more than anything else, something which contradicts the image of unimaginative Puritan that he presents in Father and Son. It is as if Edmund cannot reconcile the religious father with the creative one; he characterizes the "yoke" of typology as a destructive entity which squelches the sin of storytelling. But at the same time he envies the father's literary "sins".

Even though the image of Philip in The Life is primarily that of an imaginative character, Edmund cannot restrain some select snide remarks about his father's artistic tastes and qualities. For instance, Edmund describes what Philip read when he lived in Newfoundland from 1827 to 1835:

He began to devour all the verse that was to be discovered in Carbonear, and to form a manuscript selection of the pieces which struck him as being the best. . . . This collection, in two volumes, is now in my possession, and testifies to the refined, but, of course, somewhat conventional taste, of the lad (The Life of PHG 69).

The anthology constitutes part of the son's own inheritance, but it is an inheritance which he rejects as too

"conventional", the product of an unsophisticated (33) lad in a crude colonial environment. Edmund writes about Philip with the patronizing indulgence of a mature, sophisticated, and worldly father. He is Overton to Philip's Ernest Pontifex in Butler's The Way of All Flesh. The younger Gosse implies that he would have made a better selection of poems<sup>9</sup>.

The sense of uneasiness which a reading of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse can generate might have something to do with the fact that Edmund becomes the father of his father. In writing the biography he becomes older than Philip and assumes the role of omniscient narrator, i.e. he writes about events and experiences in his father's past that he could have no way of knowing first hand. He must reconstruct Philip's career from letters and books that describe events which occurred before his own birth. Yet in this process of reconstruction, Edmund commands authority over the materials of his biography, and ultimately over the representational fate of Philip. The former reserves the author's right to compose, select, and imagine, thus "coercing" his father into a particular form and shape. This is also the typologist's right, as Emily exercised in Abraham and His Children and Anna in Tell Jesus!.

In some ways, Edmund seems more "in control" of Philip in the biography than in the autobiography, perhaps because of the emotional distance he was able to achieve in the earlier book. As for the other biographies he wrote, Edmund is less worshipful of his father and more critical of him than some of the poets who were also under his biographical



jurisdiction. The mantle of authorial authority that Edmund assumes in his role as narrator of his father's life is what supports his vision of himself as independent creator, thus revealing his desire to progress from dependent son and servant to father and master. Yet this masterful position is undermined in the pages of the 1890 biography itself, partly because it relies so heavily on Philip Gosse's own "literature". Moreover, the "Biblical" father that Edmund tries to bury in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse does not always cooperate. The Father becomes a resurrected monster who refuses to stay dead.

#### V.i. The Typological Father in "The Life of Philip Henry Gosse".

I have argued that The Life is relatively free of typological references, especially when it is compared to the memoirs of Emily. However, although they are not nearly so numerous as in Father and Son, typological comparisons do creep into the narrative, almost unnoticed, and almost, it seems, against the author's will. The image of Philip in The Life is primarily that of a scientific or literary figure; if he must be styled after a supernatural character, he is a Greek God or pagan enthusiast. Yet the father is also a wandering pilgrim or Israelite, lost in the wilderness of the New World. And he makes a brief appearance as a patriarch.

The typological references to Abraham and his children are indirect and occur very infrequently; the younger Gosse

never directly calls his father by a Biblical name. Nevertheless, the ghostly existence of the Israelites in the text testifies to the power of Edmund's typological inheritance. Typology is present in The Life, just as the ghost of the son and the ghost of Father and Son haunts the pages of the 1890 biography. Despite Edmund's struggle to wrest his father from the religious tradition that he regarded as enslaving, its influence remains, however repressed.

Emily's 1835 "Recollections" open with a passage from Deuteronomy 8:2 that exhorts the Israelites to remember "the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness". Her husband's wanderings only lasted half as long--from 1827 to 1846--but they repeated the Exodus experience, in the sense that Philip's years of exile were also a time of struggle, poverty, and trial. (Though, to be fair, they also provided the budding naturalist with enjoyable creature-collecting expeditions).

In The Life, Edmund makes reference to the conventional typology of colonialism and manifest destiny, with the American continent, in this case Canada, representing the Promised Land, potentially flowing with milk and honey (The Life of PHG 90-91). However, after living in Newfoundland, Canada, Alabama, and Jamaica and failing to put down roots in any of these places, Philip decided that the land of promise was back home. On a brief trip to England in 1833 while he was still in exile, he described the Dorset countryside in enraptured terms: "it seemed to my enchanted senses, just come from dreary Newfoundland, that I was in

Paradise" (74). Philip reverses the conventional European formula of pilgrimage to the New World in the West. His Canaan eventually turned out to be Devon, and thus he travels from West to East like a pilgrim of old.

Typological imagery is used to describe the house in St. Marychurch, where Edmund and his father settled after Emily's death, and where Philip himself eventually died. The property "spread out, vague and uncomely, "like the red outline of beginning Adam"<sup>10</sup>, but despite its original lack of aesthetic appeal, the purchase of this property was a landmark in the owner's life. Edmund records: "It was on September 23, 1857, that the family settled in this house-- named Sandhurst . . . and this became their home. Philip Gosse's restless wanderings were over" (The Life of PHG 275). His pilgrimage complete, the father resembles Bunyan's hero, Christian, at the end of his journey<sup>11</sup>. The red Adamic soil indicates that the elder Gosse has returned to the source, the original earth, the promised land. Devon, in its proximity to Dorset, represents the land of childhood<sup>12</sup>.

Philip is granted a cameo role as Abraham in The Life, when Edmund memorializes his father's "miraculous" writing powers. Despite the fact that he was in his early seventies, Philip wrote The Claspings Organs ancillary to Generation in Certain Groups of the Lepidoptera, which was accepted for publication by the Linnaean Society. This scientific body "undertook to bring it out, and, to my father's extreme gratification, this child of his old age was finally issued in May, 1883, as a handsome quarto" (The

Life of PHG 317). The Linnaean Society plays midwife to the Isaac of Philip's literary production. This literary reawakening occurred in tandem with a general revival of interest in the pursuits of his younger days. What other men--like King David, Hardy, or Ibsen--might experience in the form of renewed sexual appetite, Philip channelled into the examination of butterfly genitals and a general renaissance of his "zoological enthusiasm" (308). Proof of his masterful patriarchal potency lies in "his remarkable aftermath of scientific publications" (308)<sup>13</sup>.

Edmund calls the Clasping Organs monograph a "memoir" (317), thus placing his own memoir-writing within a scientific and family tradition. Like the author of Tell Jesus!, Philip supplies the butterfly memoir with a theological dedication (317) to disguise a sexual subtext, just as the pious dedication to The Life--"I have taken it to be the truest piety to represent him exactly as I knew him" (viii)--disguises the biographer's unfilial feeling. Edmund recognizes the possible "dirty old man" implications of his father's study and he criticizes the project for its lack of aesthetic appeal as much as for its unelevating character (317)<sup>14</sup>. "Certain organs" of butterflies are as raw and ugly as the uncouth red soil of St. Marychurch.

The final image of the "Biblical" father (or fathers) occurs in a passage that details his physical and personal characteristics:

No one can doubt that, without intending to be so, he was often not a little awe-inspiring. This was partly caused by his introspective habit of mind, self-contained in meditation; partly also by his extreme timidity, which found shelter under this severe and awful mien.

The Jehovah image--the awe He inspires, the severe mien--is complemented by a prophetic one. The passage continues:

Very often, when the person who approached him wondered whether those oracular lips would fulminate, the oracle himself was only speculating how soon he could flee away into his study and be at rest (The Life of PHG 207).

An oracle is a classical rather than Biblical mouthpiece for the divine, but Philip's potentially "fulminating" lips indicate a general aptitude for the prophetic vocation.

Yet the severe prophet can also express mercy and tenderness, resembling the Christ of the New Testament: "The air of severity . . . was occasionally removed by a cloud of immeasurable tenderness passing across the great brown lustrous orbs of his eyes. His smile was rare, but when it came it was exquisite" (207). Here, Edmund allows more emotion into the narrative than is usual for The Life; he seems to really miss his father and his "immeasurable tenderness".

In Father and Son, he confesses that he confused his father "in some sense with God" (56) when he was a child, a confusion which still persists in The Life. Even though the biography presents a father who is less Biblical, the patriarchal Father is determined not to be ignored. Edmund may not have been interested in writing a "Gospel" of his father in the same way Anna and Philip were about Emily, but the gospel tries to get written despite himself. He was not trying to reconstruct a saint's life or lead sinners to Christ, yet the presence of the divine father still remains, in however diluted and disguised a form. The project of disinheriting the father from a theological tradition and

reconstructing him along secular lines is being continually unravelled in the narrative.

#### V.ii. Philip Gosse's Typological and Tropological Practices.

Edmund prefers to avoid discussion of his father's religious characteristics and typological practices, but he nevertheless "does not feel at liberty to ignore" them (The Life of PHG 169). For the interested reader, an appendix is provided which gives Philip's own account of his religious convictions. The appendix reveals the fact that Philip's interest in typology, like his wife's, was partially inspired by his fascination with prophecy. In 1842, he experienced a revolutionary change in his religious consciousness when he read Matthew Habershon's Dissertation on the Prophetic Scriptures, which completely transformed his thinking:

Of the Restoration of the Jews, I had received some dim inkling already, perhaps from Croly's Salathiel; but of the destruction of the Papacy, the end of Gentilism, the kingdom of God, the resurrection and rapture of the Church at the personal descent of the Lord, and the imminency of this,--all came on me that evening like a flash of lightning (375-76).

As when Mark Rutherford read Lyrical Ballads, Philip's inner transformation is sudden, overwhelming, and highly textual in inspiration. He applies Habershon's doctrines tropologically, especially that of the Lord's immediate second coming: "I immediately began a practice, which I have pursued uninterruptedly for forty-six years, of constantly praying that I may be one of the favoured saints who shall never taste of death . . ." (376).

Although there is no clear and direct connection "between the two movements" in Philip's mind, the "enlargement of mind and heart thus effected" by Habershon's books "was doubtless operative in the preparation for another important spiritual change,--the perception, and then the reception, of what are known as "Brethren's principles." (The Life of PHG 376). His exposure to the Brethren came about through an introduction to Mr. William Berger, who was the brother of a man whom he knew through his Wesleyan connections. Berger and his wife

had been for some time prominent in the little band in Hackney who, discerning the evil of sectarian division in the Church of God, had associated together in the Name of Jesus only, refusing any distinctive title but that one common to all believers, of "Brethren", and including under this appellation all who, in every place, love the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever their measure of light or scripturalness of practice (377).

This reads much the same as Emily's 1841 letter to her cousin Sarah Stoddard, in which she outlines the Ecumenical principles of the Brethren.

Philip was in sympathy, for the most part, with the Brethren's beliefs, but it was their method of reading scripture which seems to have affected him most. Before he came to the weekly meetings at the Berger's house, he had never heard of "such a "Scripture reading," now so common" (The Life of PHG 378). When he arrived at his first Scripture reading, he found a group of ten people sitting around the Berger's dining room table with their Bibles in front of them. They were

engaged on Rom. i, and the seventeenth verse occupied the whole evening. Such a close and minute digging for hid treasures was a novelty to me; as was also the deference and subjection to the Word of God, and

the comparing of Scripture with Scripture. . . . almost all could refer to the Greek original; and there was unrestrained freedom of discussion, and perfect loving confidence (378).

Philip took to heart the practice of performing close-readings of the Bible, as well as the typological technique of "comparing Scripture with Scripture".

His son, both in The Life and his autobiography, provides evidence that his father completely immersed himself in the Bible:

Put in a nutshell, then, his code was the Bible, and the Bible only, without any modern modification whatever; without allowance for any difference between the old world and the new, without any distinction of value in parts, without the smallest concession to the critical spirit upon any point; an absolute, uncompromising, unquestioning reliance on the Hebrew and Greek texts as inspired by the mouth of God and uncorrupted by the hand of man (The Life of PHG 328).

Philip practised typology and tropology in the same way it is practised in Abraham and His Children, "without allowance" for the differences between Biblical and modern historical contexts. Emily memorized most of the Psalms, but her husband performed even more amazing feats of memory, learning by heart: "the whole New Testament, all the Psalms, most of the Prophets, and all the lyrical portions of the Historical Books" (328). Philip was certain of "his own competence to interpret" (328) the Bible, which is in contrast to Edmund's professed incompetence to interpret his father's religious experience.

Further religious coverage of the "typological" father is provided by his widow, Eliza Gosse, who remembers being attracted by his method of reading the Bible when she first caught sight of him in the pulpit (thus joining his first



wife in her love of clergymen). In appendix I to The Life, she recalls the sermon he preached:

It was a gospel address from a part of the story of Boaz and Ruth, which history he was going through on successive Sunday evenings. It is a singularly beautiful type of Christ and His Church. I found, afterwards, it was a favourite method with Mr. Gosse to illustrate the New through the characters of the Old Testament (354)<sup>15</sup>.

He believed that Christ was the "one key, whereby we are able to unlock the hidden treasures contained in the Bible" (354).

Edmund himself admits that his father and his sect were ingenious in their Bible-readings:

The absence from their ritual of any other book threw them upon the study of the Bible, and the fact that most of the founders of the sect were educated and, perhaps it may be added, somewhat eccentrically educated men, made their exposition of the Scripture deep, ingenious, and unconventional (The Life of PHG 214).

Ironically, Philip is creative in his religious practices where he was philistine in his poetic tastes (according to his son, anyway), and he belonged to a community of "poetic" readers of the Bible. Edmund mirrored his father in reverse, wanting to see himself as creative poet and failed convert.

Philip was also a genius at tropological application of Biblical texts:

He had a very singular objection to the feast of Christmas, conceiving this festival to be a heathen survival. . . . He regarded plum-pudding and roast turkey as innocent and acceptable, if the fatal word had not been pronounced in connection with them; but if once they were spoken of as "Christmas turkey," or a "Christmas pudding," they became abominable, "food offered to idols." Biblical students will observe the source of this idea--a most ingenious adaptation to modern life of an injunction to the Corinthians (The Life of PHG 331).

The caveat comes from 1 Corinthians 8:4: "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world and there is none other God but one." Therefore a turkey eaten at a pagan Christmas festival becomes flesh offered to idols, a bird which belies the One true God.

Tropology wreaks havoc on the celebratory rites of modern holidays, as on one memorable New Year's Day at the Gosse's: "I well recollect my father's taking off the dish-cover and revealing a magnificent goose at dinner, while he paused to remark to the guests . . . "I need not assure you, dear friends, that this bird has not been offered to the idol" (The Life of PHG 332).

#### VI.i. The Fictional Dimension of "The Life".

If Edmund was reluctant to discuss the soul of his father in great detail, he was enthusiastic about depicting the latter's poetic side (which Edmund tried to keep separate from Philip's Biblical "poetics"), thus even further undermining Father and Son's claim that Philip was uncreative. Despite Edmund's claims to the contrary, he "fictionalizes" the story of Philip's life from the very beginning of the narrative. Typology is "necessarily" present, it is true, but that does not prevent Edmund from trying to keep it under wraps through the muffling effect that is achieved through the sheer accumulation of literary anecdotes and novelistic devices. Thus he surrounds and protects the narrative from typological and theological

influence, while at the same time drawing upon typology's propensity to take liberties with the story of another person's life.

The first few sentences of the first chapter of the biography establish it (and its characters) within a literary context:

Early in the spring of 1807 a middle-aged gentleman arrived in Worcester by the Bath coach, and proceeded to modest lodgings, where he was already well known and highly respected. He was a man of a somewhat rueful countenance, whose well-made, thread-bare clothes indicated at the same time a certain past quality and an obvious state of present impecuniosity (1).

If the reader did not know he was reading a biography, the opening pages of The Life could easily read like the beginning of a novel. Suspense is built up by leaving the "middle-aged gentleman" unnamed, a character who turns out to be the author's grandfather, Thomas Gosse<sup>16</sup>. The dramatic scene is set--we know the year, the season, the place--and the state of the man's clothes indicates his social station.

The book about a scientist opens "fictionally", while Father and Son, a book about a misunderstood poet, opens scientifically, with the no-nonsense sentence: "This book is the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs" (35). Why did Edmund choose to give the 1890 book a "novelistic" genesis? Possibly he did it to help disinherit his family and therefore himself from the genealogy of Abraham and his children. Thus he fashions his own ancestry, transforming the patriarch of the Gosse family into a fictional

character, a ghostly, "imaginary", figure who is robbed of the power to define or write his destiny. Fictional grandfathers and fathers are perhaps less threatening than Biblical ones. Yet to create these ancestors, Edmund must draw upon his typological and tropological training, which taught him how to define a life authoritatively according to textual precedents.

The character of Philip moves through the pages of his biography like a romantic hero, or at least a protagonist in a novel. He is an English adventurer who is sensitive to the natural beauty of the American "Promised Land". Take, for instance, Edmund's account of his father's vision of the Alabama forest:

in the balmy air of the wood-yard, several fox-squirrels descended and chased one another from bough to bough of the nearest oaks, a pair of summer redbirds (Tanagra aestiva) were flirting almost within reach of his hand, and a flock of those delicate butterflies, the hairstreaks (Thecla), came dancing to him down a glade in the forest (124).

Despite the intrusive parenthetical inclusion of the scientific names of birds and butterflies, the passage is highly poetic<sup>17</sup>, with its Puritan St. Francis holding out his hand to the flirting and dancing creatures. Philip is turned into a kind of pied piper of the Alabama woods, with the omniscient son pretending to have "been there" at the time; for how else could he have known that the air was balmy and the squirrels frisky? The whole experience occurred eleven years before Edmund was born, and depends upon his "sympathetic imagination" to reconstruct the scene. This intimacy with another person's former life is

reminiscent of the Gosse family's tropological intimacy with Biblical characters. Moreover, the very fact that Edmund was not there only frees him up to take further poetic liberties. Though unborn, he is nevertheless older than Philip--floating above the trees observing the scene, a narrator and voyeur.

In his book Fictional Techniques and Factual Works (1983), William Siebenschuh debates the question of whether factual works like biography or autobiography are compromised by the use of certain literary devices. He defines what he means by "the words art and literary art" as follows:

By art I mean here the use of particular dramatic and stylistic techniques that we normally associate only with fiction or poetry: dialogue, dramatized episodes, sustained narrative or dramatic structure, symbolism, imagery, and heavy dependence on the purely affective dimension of language (6-7).

In The Life and other biographies, Gosse employs all of the devices that Siebenschuh enumerates, with particular emphasis on dramatic scenes and "sustained narrative"<sup>18</sup>.

The "affective dimension of language" also plays a large part in the construction of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse's narrative. Edmund's poetic style can be detected in a number of passages, one of which describes his paternal grandmother:

The beauty, the strength, the pastoral richness of the nature of Hannah Best produced an instant and extraordinary effect on Thomas Gosse. She was one of his Sicilian shepherdesses come to life again. Theocritus himself seemed to have prophesied of this beautiful child of a race of neatherds (4).

Edmund tells his readers that Thomas Gosse was never without his "Bible, and Theocritus in Greek, which . . . formed, at

the darkest moments of his career, a gate of instant exit from the hard facts of life into an idyllic world of glowing pastoral antiquity" (1). It is the Greek heritage over the Biblical which emerges most strongly in the opening chapter of The Life, the former tradition being the one with which the author most wants to identify. He is the descendant of a Greek scholar and a Mediterranean shepherdess, not a pale urban Puritan.

The father that Edmund seems to admire is the one who writes The Romance of Natural History, and the son often tries to imitate the father's poetic portraits of God's creatures<sup>19</sup>. Edmund's description of the marine life Philip once saw in the Caribbean Sea provides a precursor to the former's sea-creature monograph in Father and Son:

The crew set themselves to fish in the rain, and soon pulled out of the water plentiful fishes of the most extraordinary harlequin colours, vermilion-gilled, amber-banded, striped like a zebra but with violet, or streaked with fantastic forked lightnings of pink and silver (The Life of PHG 119).

The author does not settle for red or yellow or purple, but uses the names of colours that artists might ask for in the paint shop: vermilion, amber, violet. Words like harlequin, fantastic, and lightning would be at home in a poem or novel; they are much more fanciful than the words used to describe New Testament fishermen and fish.

Edmund's fancy is stimulated by the beauty of the South Devon coast (as it is in Father and Son), and the son depicts his father's zoological haunts at Babbicombe and Oddicombe in terms of classical mythology:

he discovered . . . a feature of extraordinary charm, a natural basin in the face of the rock, a veritable little bath where one might conceive the Nereids

indolently collecting to gossip at high noon as they plashed the water with their feet (The Life of PHG 237).

Yet it is difficult to imagine Philip plashing along with the Nereids, and the passage is inspired by a flight of the imagination more appropriate to a poet than a level-headed biographer.

Although the son reins in his propensity to poeticize when he comes to the task of describing his father's actual death, he does create a fittingly poetic death for him at the end of the last chapter (which follows the "Last Years" chapter that contains the spartan death-scene). The Life ends on a firmly "fictional" note, with his father in a carriage on the last drive he would ever take:

as we turned to drive back down a steep lane of over-hanging branches, the pale vista of the sea burst upon us, silvery blue in the yellow light of afternoon. Something in the beauty of the scene raised the sunken brain, and with a little of the old declamatory animation in head and hand, he began to recite the well-known passage in the fourth book of Paradise Lost--"Now came still evening on, and twilight grey/Had in her sober livery all things clad" (351-352).

Thus, "the latest conscious exercise of my father's brain was connected with his love for poetry" (351). Yet this contradicts the account in Thwaite's biography, where the father's last "conscious exercise" was to cry out against the God who forsook him. By re-writing the last chapter of his father's life in poetic terms, Edmund writes him out of the typological tradition and forces him to quote poetry rather than scream blasphemies. The death is coerced into a Miltonic twilight and thus the book is not allowed to end on a religious note. The poetry that Philip recites is

religious, but it is not scripture, nor even particularly evangelical in tone. In this way, Edmund avoids repeating the typological conclusions of The Memorial and Tell Jesus!. Nevertheless, he imitates these memoirs' freedom of interpretation in relation to death scenes, merely exchanging the type of Christ for the type of Milton. Both the Biblical and poetic father-portraits contain elements of truth, but Edmund reserves the right to distort these portraits through the shaping lens of art, a shaping technique which he owes to his Biblical training.

#### VI.ii. Poetic and Romantic Influences on Philip Henry Gosse.

When he reconstructs the literary history of his father's life, Edmund is careful to emphasize the influence of the Romantic poets, thus providing a Romantic heritage for himself as well---a heritage which is confirmed when he joins the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood as a young man. The son's membership in this school of painters and poets is not surprising, considering how the father sympathized with the "'Preraphaelite' treatment":

the exact, minute and hard execution of Mr. Hunt was in sympathy with the methods we ourselves were in the habit of using when we painted butterflies and seaweeds, placing perfectly pure pigments side by side, without any nonsense about chiaroscuro (F&S 192).

Science and art complement one another here, thus even more firmly placing Philip within a secular tradition that is separate from the Biblical (although this separation, in some respects, is an artificial one).



As scientist and poet, Philip takes his place alongside Rossetti in a dramatic scene at the central lobby of the British Museum "when the winged bull from Nineveh was being brought in":

It was interesting, and it greatly interested Philip Gosse to think, that in the little crowd that watched the bull-god enter his last temple, he had unconsciously stood shoulder to shoulder with the brilliant young poet, those two, perhaps alone among the spectators, sharing the acute sense of mystery and wonder at the apparition (The Life of PHG 226).

The poetic and pagan father is revealed here, sharing Rossetti's reverential attitude towards the bull-god, although Philip did not defy monotheistic tradition as deliberately as Edmund did when he worshipped a chair as a child (F&S 66-67). Both Rossetti and Philip seem to be Edmund's father in the Museum scene, as they share one poetic consciousness; the two men's identities collapse into each other as they lose themselves in the "mystery and wonder" of the epiphany of the bull. Edmund prefers the father who feels awe towards a pagan rather than Christian god, especially when he rubs shoulders with a poetic worshipper like Rossetti, who could also be read as another version of Edmund.

Rossetti is credited with being one of the poets that Philip admired; he is added to the roll-call of favorites whom Edmund lists in the sentences preceding the Miltonic "last carriage drive" scene. In this way, the "poetic" death of the father is further reinforced and made authentic by his willing captivity to the romantic tradition:

The one art by which he was vividly affected was poetry. The magic of romantic verse, which had taken him captive in early boyhood, when he found it

first in the pages of Lara, never entirely lost its spell over him. Milton (though with occasional qualms, because Paradise Lost was "tainted with the Arian heresy"), Wordsworth, Gray, Cowper, and Southey, were at his fingers' ends. . . . He was much more interested, towards the end, in portions of Swinburne and Rossetti, than he had ever been in Tennyson and Browning (The Life of PHG 351)<sup>20</sup>.

The conversion to poetry that Philip experienced with Byron's Lara--"I had acquired a new sense" (25)--reads like the one which Edmund experienced when his father read Virgil to him (although this experience was interpreted in the typological context of Samson's riddle, F&S 143). The image of "magic" and "enchantment" persists in the pages of Edmund's autobiography as well. Father and son share a love for many of the same poets, particularly Wordsworth, Swinburne, and Rossetti. Hence the foregoing passage could easily be read as "autobiographical" for the son. Yet Father and Son, which tells the story of how Edmund was bewitched by poetry and thus seduced from his predetermined calling as converted Puritan preacher, refuses to admit that the father himself was similarly "bewitched" and well-read in poetry: "For [Philip and Emily] there had been no poet later than Byron" (F&S 38).

In The Life, Edmund downplays the role of Puritan literature as formative influence on his father's writing. Philip did read Robinson Crusoe and The Pilgrim's Progress, but more copy is devoted to his Romantic reading: Scott, Byron (15), Chatterton (17). The author of the 1890 biography traces the models for his father's books back to romances that he read in his early youth:

The only masters under whom he studied prose were romance-writers of a class now wholly neglected and almost forgotten. Fenimore Cooper, whose novels

were appearing in quick succession between 1820 and 1840, introduced into these stories of Indian life elaborate studies of landscape and seascape which had a real merit of their own. The Canadian Naturalist shows evident signs of an enthusiastic study of these descriptive parts of Cooper (345).

The ornamental style of many of Philip's scientific books is traced to Rev. George Croly, to whom he owes "something of the gorgeousness and redundancy of his more purple passages" (345). And "John Banim, the Irish novelist, whose O'Hara Tales captivated him so long, left a mark on the minute and graphic style of Philip Gosse" (345). Just as Edmund's "scientific" biographies are fictional in style, so his father's biographies of animals derive their literary model from novels. Father and son take their place in a Romantic literary tradition that is portrayed as being more formative for their prose than the Bible.

The passages from his father's books that Edmund admires and cites are the purple and romantic ones, once again contradicting the latter's later claim that his father was unimaginative. One representative sample comes from a travel journal that Philip wrote on a sea-journey to Alabama via the Florida keys:

To me it is very pleasing to peer down into the depths below, especially in the clear water of these southern seas, and look at the many-coloured bottom, --sometimes a bright pearly sand, spotted with shells and corals, then a large patch of brown rock, whose gaping clefts and fissures are but half hidden by the waving tangles of purple weed, where multitudes of shapeless creatures revel and riot undisturbed (The Life of PHG 118-119).

The passage is fairly circumspect in its use of poetic images, and it is less Biblical in inspiration than Edmund's

description of the tempting Devonshire sea-scape in Father and Son:

My great desire was to walk out over the sea as far as I could, and then lie flat on it, face downwards, and peer into the depths. . . . The idea was not quite so demented as it may seem, because we were in the habit of singing, as well as reading, of those enraptured beings who spend their days in 'flinging down their golden crowns upon the jasper sea'. . . . And without question, a majestic scene upon the Lake of Gennesaret had also inflamed my fancy (101).

The son uses the father's exact words--"peer into the depths"-- but he is more Biblical than his father in his "reading" of the sea.

Just as he beat his father at the typological game in the passage above, Edmund tries to out-poeticize his father's description of the Florida reef. The following sentence occurs directly after Philip's words "revel and riot undisturbed":

Almost through one day their course bore them through a fleet of "Portugese men-of-war," those exquisite mimic vessels, with their sapphire hulls and pale pink sails, whose magic navigation seems made to conduct some fairy queen of the tropics through the foam of perilous seas to her haven in an island of pearl (The Life of PHG 119)<sup>21</sup>.

It might be twentieth-century sensibility which finds Edmund's man-of-war passage affected, or just plain silly, in the context of an official biography. Yet in the sea-descriptions in Father and Son and The Life, Edmund's exaggeration of typology and poetry could be an attempt to be more like his father than his father himself. By parodying Philip, he can trade his role of servant for that of master, but first he must project himself into everything the master represents, perhaps over-compensating in the process. He imitates his father in order to try and

transcend him and his influence. He occupies the tradition in order to re-write it.

The romantic sentences which Edmund borrows from his father to help compose The Life represent what he most admires and wishes to emulate, thus making his emancipation into poetry in Father and Son seem like mere re-entry into the father's poetic kingdom. As Edmund notes in The Life (291), Philip Gosse himself admits that he perceives his role as natural historian to be fundamentally literary in nature. He writes in the preface to The Romance of Natural History:

I have always felt towards it something of a poet's heart, though destitute of a poet's genius. As Wordsworth so beautifully says:--"To me the meanest flower that blows can give/Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." Now, this book is an attempt to present natural history in this aesthetic fashion (v-vi)<sup>22</sup>.

True to his word, many of Philip's sentences are highly "literary", and these are the ones Edmund most readily adopts for his own literary ancestry; in the process, he further contradicts the claim that his father lacked "sympathetic imagination". A final example of Philip's style will suffice, which Edmund takes from an unpublished fragment:

Waiving our privilege of breathing the thin and elastic air, let us descend in imagination to the depths of ocean, and explore the gorgeous treasures that adorn the world of the mermaids. . . . The sun is no longer visible through the depth of the incumbent sea; but a subdued greenish light, soft and uniform, sufficiently reveals the wonders of the scene (The Life of PHG 173-74).

The father's phrasing technique and style influences his son to a marked degree, the submarine description reading

like an extravagant page from one of Edmund's biographies. Thus the notion that the inheritance Edmund is willing to accept from his father is primarily literary and not Biblical is reinforced, although this does not prevent the Biblical from coming back to haunt Edmund, as it does with a vengeance in Father and Son. Moreover, Edmund's division of Philip into two different fathers in The Life and Father and Son often seems like an artificial one.

The sin of storytelling that his mother forbade is haunting as well, in that Edmund must rely upon the imaginative, though potentially authoritative, typological principles his parents taught him in order to re-tell their stories after his own fashion. Edmund owes his skill at "literary" biography to the typological and tropological training he received, as exemplified in the way in which he replaces Biblical types with literary types--his father, Theocritus, and Milton--and sees himself as an antitype of these poetic ancestors.

#### VII. Father and Son in "The Life of Philip Henry Gosse".

The story of Father and Son is foreshadowed in The Life, just as the proposed autobiography of Edmund can be traced in the pages of Abraham and His Children. The Life provides a ghostly outline of the plot of the 1907 autobiography, demonstrating once again that Edmund's stories and plots are not completely original, but find their "natural" source in the stories of his father. What is almost eerie is how the son's life repeats the father's

life--they dream the same dream (Life 10), read Encyclopedias, draw colorful pictures of animals, and fall in love with poetry. The identity of the Father and the identity of the son become blurred, thus making The Life over into another autobiography of Edmund, just as Tell Jesus! was essentially Shipton's autobiography.

The son makes his debut in the form of a character in Philip's The Canadian Naturalist (1840). Edmund judges its narrative structure to be "somewhat unfortunate, for it consisted of a series of conversations between an imaginary father and son, "during successive walks, taken at the various seasons of the year"" (The Life of PHG 159). The book was published nine years before Edmund's birth in 1849, so the son really was imaginary, but nevertheless the father and son story in The Canadian Naturalist serves as "literary" precursor to the dramatic conflicts of Father and Son. The relationship between the pretend parent and child in the 1840 book is indicative of how Philip imagined this relationship should be:

The presentment of facts was by no means helped by the snip-snap of the dialogue, and the supposed father was found most entertaining when he talked with least interruption from the young inquirer (The Life of PHG 159).

Yet Edmund uses dialogue in his books as well, including Father and Son, whose plot follows the "spectral" script presented in The Canadian Naturalist. In the former book, the father is equally authoritative and overbearing in conversations in which he argues theology with his (this time) real son:

He would declare himself ready, nay eager for argument. With his mental sleeves turned up, he

would adopt a fighting attitude, and challenge me to a round on any portion of the Scheme of Grace . . . . He was, indeed, most unfairly handicapped,--I was naked, he in a suit of chain armour. . . . These 'discussions', as they were rather ironically called, invariably ended for me in disaster (F&S 244).

In both passages--the imaginary and the "real"--the son is silent, defenceless, dependent. His father holds the advantage from the start, being older, wiser, and protected against any possible invasions or questions from the son. In both books, the son is an insubstantial figure. Even in Father and Son, he may as well be imaginary, so little does he project his personality on the world (at least not until he defies his father at the very end of the book).

The symbol of the shadow or ghost is carried through in the narrative of Edmund's own birth in The Life. The story intrudes upon a discussion of his father's investigation of rotifers, in which Philip can be seen fixing "in his garden a set of stagnant open pans or reservoirs for infusoria, which, from the prevalence of cholera at the time, were looked upon with great suspicion by the neighbours" (223). We find Philip trying to create life in stagnant pools of water--a kind of Frankenstein of the rotifers. Meanwhile, his wife gives birth to Edmund:

In the midst of all this, and during the very thrilling examination of three separate stagnations of hempseed, poppy seed, and hollyhock seed, his wife presented him with a child, a helpless and unwelcome apparition, whose arrival is marked in the parental dairy in the following manner:--"E. delivered of a son. Received green swallow from Jamaica." Two ephemeral vitalities, indeed, and yet, strange to say, both exist! The one stands for ever behind a pane of glass in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington; the other, whom the green swallow will doubtless survive, is he who now puts together these deciduous pages (The Life of PHG 223).



Boy and swallow are twin brothers who arrive together and are greeted with equal degrees of enthusiasm. Unlike the "apparition" of the Bull-god, described earlier, Edmund is not received with joy and wonder. He recaptures the feeling of being unwanted in Father and Son: "In this strange household the advent of a child was not welcomed, but was borne with resignation" (38) and the diary quotation about the Jamaican bird is repeated<sup>23</sup>.

The father present at the son's birth scene is above all a scientist--interested in his rotifers and birds--conducting experiments and writing down his observations in a journal. He is not an Abraham who rejoices in the child of his middle age. This patriarchal allusion is reserved for his literary, not sexual, productivity. He is not a miraculous father to an Isaac, Samuel, or even a Christ; the only seeds he plants are hempseed, poppy seed, and hollyhock seed. Thus the birth of Edmund seems curiously inhuman, miraculous in a scientific rather than a Biblical way. The real "miracle" is that Edmund gives birth to himself in the text, referring to the child in the third person, as if he were a character in a novel. His personal presence is merely hinted at in the distancing and allusive phrase "he who now puts together these deciduous pages" (223).

The narrative perspective keeps shifting in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, making the son difficult to pin down; he is a disembodied narrator, not incarnate or made flesh in the text. Yet he becomes more tangible when autobiography openly breaks into the biography. The author's first person persona makes an appearance with the birth of self-

consciousness in The Life, where his memories are used as supplementary material to help describe Philip's scientific classes by the seashore in the summer of 1855:

Here for the first time I can trust my own recollection for one or two of those detached impressions which remain imprinted here and there on the smoothed-out wax of a child's memory. I recall a long desultory line of persons on a beach of shells. . . . At the head of the procession, like Apollo conducting the Muses, my father strides ahead in an immense wide-awake, loose black coat and trousers, and fisherman's boots, with a collecting basket in one hand, a staff or prod in the other (258).

The image of Gosse as shepherd of the oceans is one which his son repeats in Father and Son (147), but the Apollo-figure is unique to The Life, and is consistent with attempts made to rescue the father for the classical and literary tradition. As recorded in the biography, Edmund's first memory is not of a Christian Father but a Greek God. The first memory recorded in Father and Son excludes the father completely and concerns the figures of a boy, a piece of meat on the table, and a thieving greyhound (45). In the latter memory the son seems like an orphan--alone, disinherited--and in the Apollo memory the son is eclipsed by the powerful striding figure of the father, a creative deity who leads the Muses. Edmund is not an participant in either scene, but merely a passive observer.

Another memory which the son revives in connection with the classical beach scene--complete with "enthusiastic nymphs" for students--is very sensual in tone:

my father [is] standing at the mouth of a sort of funnel in the rocks, through which came at intervals a roaring sound, a copious jet of exploding foam, and a sudden liquid rainbow against the dark wall of rock, surrounding him in its fugitive radiance. Without question, this is a reminiscence of the

Capstone Spout-Holes, to which my father would be certain to take the class (258)<sup>24</sup>.

The father is a pagan saint, with a liquid rainbow for a halo. Alternatively, as post-Freudians might read the scene, he is a fertility figure or primal father, keeper of the exploding foam from the spout hole. Here, Edmund is in awe of the raw potency of the father and is infatuated with him in the same way that he was with other masterful literary men that he memorialized. This is reminiscent of Anna Shipton's feelings for Emily. Emily herself is absent from the early memories of the beach<sup>25</sup>, and the stagnant pans in which the father spontaneously reproduces are exchanged for the open sea.

Neither of these memories--Apollo or the Spout Hole--are mentioned in Father and Son, perhaps because they contradict the Biblical images of the father that he constructs there. The conflict between Christian and Pagan father is one which is reminiscent of Matthew Arnold's Hebrew and Hellenic dichotomy, as Philip Dodd points out in his 1979 article, "The Nature of Edmund Gosse's Father and Son". Dodd writes: "I believe that . . . the Hebrew and Hellene debate influenced Gosse's comprehension of puritanism and paganism . . ." (271).

By way of concluding this chapter, I would like to turn to two final passages from The Life which provide a "rough draft" of Father and Son. In chapter six of the former book, Edmund writes an account of his father's habit of witnessing to strangers, something which arose from "the fresh religious zeal which he had roused in himself during

his latest weeks in Alabama . . . " (149). Although he was shy,

he had convinced himself that it was his duty to God to speak of sacred matters "in season and out of season," and he persevered in the same indomitable spirit which forced Charles Darwin, in spite of seasickness, to continue his experiments on board the Beagle (150).

The religious tone of the passage is tempered by the introduction of the plucky Darwin, Edmund refusing to compare his father to a disciple of Christ or other Biblical character.

In Father and Son, Edmund recollects that the same courage in impromptu exhortation was expected of him as a child:

He was accustomed to urge upon me the necessity of 'speaking for Jesus in season and out of season', and he so worked upon my feelings that I would start forth like St Teresa, wild for the Moors and martyrdom. But any actual impact with persons marvellously cooled my zeal, and I should hardly ever have 'spoken' at all if it had not been for that unfortunate phrase 'out of season'. . . . there was no alternative, no close time for souls (167).

The older, narrating, Edmund seems to rely on humor as an emotional defence against the Evangelical antics of his parent. The Life also offers insight into the son's defences against the religious father. The following passage occurs immediately after the comparison between Philip and Darwin:

In later years, I remember once quoting to my father, in self-defence under his spiritual cross-examination, Clough's--"O let me love my love unto myself alone/And know my knowledge to the world unknown!/No witness to the vision call . . . And worship thee, with thee withdrawn, apart . . . Within the closest veil of mine own inmost heart" (The Life of PHG 150).

Philip is not impressed, though he does concede that the lines are "mellifluous enough". However, "that is not what God asks from a converted man. It is not the luxury of meditation and the cloister, but the unwelcome effort to spread a knowledge of the truth" (150). The model for this species of trial-by-fire witnessing is Emily Gosse, who proclaimed the gospel in doctor's waiting rooms, buses, and trains.

The verses from Clough and Philip's reaction to them contain the seeds of a major conflict between the generations, the "clash of temperaments" which Father and Son narrates. They lead directly to the epilogue of the last-mentioned book, where Edmund finally confronts his father after another "spiritual cross-examination":

I desire not to recall the whimpering sentences in which I begged to be let alone, in which I demanded the right to think for myself, in which I repudiated the idea that my Father was responsible to God for my secret thoughts and my most intimate convictions (F&S 249).

To maintain his inner integrity, it was necessary to "lie", to veil his soul and hide it from his father. In Wildean terms, Edmund must wear a mask in order to more fully express his true self. This self was in danger of falling victim to the Biblical demands of the father and the Puritan tradition he represents. Father and Son throws off the yoke of this tradition in its final pages, a liberation which has been made possible with The Life's help. The two books conspire--though with different strategies--to disinherit the typological father and reinstate him in a secular and literary tradition. The Life does it by

emphasizing and exaggerating the father's poetic side to the detriment of his Biblical characteristics (and denying that the two can be compatible). Father and Son accomplishes the disinheritance process by re-writing the Biblical tradition in literary terms. Edmund crowns his father with literary laurels in The Life, only to deny the father's imaginative power in Father and Son, playing Peter to Philip's Christ.

Edmund commits the "sin of storytelling" when he paints contradictory portraits of the father in The Life and Father and Son. Yet the interpretive freedom necessary to enslave the Father into a story of the son's own making (whether it is literary or Biblical) is nothing new to the practitioners of typology which precede him. Edmund merely plugs a literary and Greek tradition into a pre-existing typological system, thus transforming his father from an Abraham to an Apollo. His literary "sins" are not original ones.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nothing is made of the fact that Emily and Philip died at the exact same time, perhaps because it might offend the sensibilities of the second wife, who approved the manuscript of The Life and wrote an appendix to it.

<sup>2</sup> The scene seems similar to that in Thomas Hardy's household after his death. Exercising her rights as editor of his biography, Florence Hardy crossed out every laudatory reference to Hardy's first wife, Emma. (See The Second Mrs. Hardy by Robert Gittings and Jo Manton (1979) p. 108).

<sup>3</sup> In a review of Gosse's The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne (1917) in Poetry (March 1918), Ezra Pound provides another version of the role Moore played in the composition of Father and Son: "Gosse has written one excellent book: Father and Son, prompted according to gossip by his wife's fear that Mr. George Moore, having been rashly allowed access to Mr. Gosse's diaries, proposed to steal the material" (322). It is true that Edmund lent Moore some family diaries to serve as background material for a novel the latter was composing, but there never seemed to be any suggestion that Moore wanted to "steal" the Father and Son story. On the contrary, he advised Edmund himself against using the "little biographies" (consisting of Philip Gosse's spiritual dealings with the "saints") that he had lent Moore. In a letter to Gosse dated Feb. 22, 1906, Moore writes: "You say that you have arrived at the point in your book [Father and Son] where you want to use them. I hope that this is merely a figure of speech. Your book . . . will not gain by the inclusion of many little anecdotes of this kind. These biographies are useful to me because I have to invent the atmosphere, but you carry it about with you, it is yourself. . . . I hope you will not think that I am fearful lest I should want to use them myself. . . . As I told you my hero leaves his father's house very early in the book" (Autograph Letters of George Moore to Sir Edmund Gosse. Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

<sup>4</sup> Charteris' statement that the National Club incident occurred in the early 1890's is contradicted by the date of this letter and its reference to Gosse's response to the suggestion "the other day". It could be that Moore read the book for the first time when the second edition came out in 1896.

<sup>5</sup> Moore himself admits that he played an important part in Father and Son's genesis. In the letter of Feb. 22, 1906, he explains why he stated his advice to avoid the "little biographies" so frankly: "You do not mind my speaking like this for you know the interest I feel in this book. Perhaps it would never have been written if it had not been for me" (Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

<sup>6</sup> George Bernard Shaw, a slightly-younger contemporary of Gosse's, who called Father and Son "one of the immortal pages of English literature" (Thwaite 509), lampooned the

nineteenth-century obsession with duty in a speech by Napoleon in The Man of Destiny (1896):

every Englishman is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world. When he wants a thing, he never tells himself that he wants it. He waits patiently until there comes into his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who possess the thing he wants. Then he becomes irresistible. . . . He does everything on principle. . . . His watchword is always Duty (205-206).

If Gosse's use of the word "duty" is read in the context of the Shaw passage, then other possible agendas can be detected--catharsis, revenge, literary artistry--which masquerade as filial duty. Shaw exposes the potential for hypocrisy which lurks behind the elevated notion of duty.

<sup>7</sup> Browning died a year after Philip Gosse and Edmund also memorialized him in Robert Browning: Personalia (1890).

<sup>8</sup> Henry James also visualized Edmund's father in classical terms. He said to Edmund in a letter of August 22, 1888: "there is apparently something primitive and Titanic in his composition" (Thwaite 315).

<sup>9</sup> Gosse is also unimpressed with the early honours given to Philip, which came to him in Newfoundland in the form of "a corresponding membership of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec". He also received a similar compliment from the Natural History Society of Montreal. These elections, indeed, conferred in themselves no great honour, for these institutions, in those early colonial days, were still in their boyhood, and too inexperienced to be critical in their selection (The Life of PHG 100).

The young Philip is perhaps unfairly damned for his scientific shortcomings as well as for his lack of literary taste.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Gosse himself is also a kind of Adam, an orphaned figure whose father, Thomas Gosse, is something of a disappointment (The Life of PHG 15). One of the reasons Philip looms so large is that he seems to be a species of self-sufficient and ancestorless man who was born with a navel but no "natural antecedents", as his book Omphalos puts forward. The impression the reader receives of Philip, especially in the chapters before he meets and marries Emily Bowes, is of an extremely lonely figure, a homeless man wandering the New World. This isolation complements his prophetic image--Philip Gosse in the wilderness. Yet through the "magic" of Edmund's poetic lens, the father becomes a lonesome Romantic rather than John the Evangelist.

<sup>11</sup> Philip could also be compared to more secular and fictional pilgrims, like Mark Rutherford and Jane Eyre. See Barry Qualls' The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction (1982).



<sup>12</sup> Philip's fascination with his childhood is recorded by Edmund: "In 1868 he became greatly interested in all that reminded him of his early life. He paid a visit to the haunts of his childhood . . . and he amassed a great quantity of anecdotes and memoranda" (The Life of PHG vii). The majority of these "anecdotes and memoranda" can be found in Philip Gosse's unpublished My Life (CUL Manuscript Room).

<sup>13</sup> Just as Philip returned to the land of his earliest memories, so he reenacted and repeated the activities of his younger self, "gratifying the yearnings of my earlier years" (The Life of PHG 314). Philip's interest in butterflies was one of the first steps in his development as a naturalist, and the "gratification" he derived from studying them was not merely sensual but professional as well. When he published his monograph on the butterflies' clasping organs, he tried to provide a theological dedication. Philip appended to The Clasping Organs

a paragraph embodying those pious reflections which his conscience conceived to be absolutely de rigueur. Rightly or wrongly, these sentiments appeared to the council of the Linnaean Society to be out of place in a very abstruse description of certain organs, which are curious, but neither beautiful nor calculated to inspire ideas of a particularly elevating nature (The Life of PHG 317).

<sup>14</sup> This criticism was first voiced in a letter dated March 4th 1873 in which Edmund defends poetry over science: "The study of poetry seems to me a loftier one than that of microscopic zoology; it does not seem so to you" (Charteris 52-53).

<sup>15</sup> Yet on this occasion, one suspects that the story of Boaz and Ruth was more than just a type of Christ and the Church to "Mr. Gosse's" future wife. Unbeknownst to the Brethren preacher, Boaz and Ruth could be types of Philip and Eliza.

<sup>16</sup> Suspense is employed in Gosse's other biographies as well.

<sup>17</sup> This sentimental account of Philip Gosse's experience of Alabama leaves out the less "picturesque" side of Southern life in 1838. Philip was sickened by the abuses of slavery (The Life of PHG 143), and he castigates the "peculiar institution" more than a decade later in a tract entitled "The Negro Slave" in Gosse's Narrative Tracts. The tract tells the story of an escaped slave who experienced brutal treatment on a sugar plantation in New Orleans: "Such was the poor man's simple tale, to which I listened with the more interest, because I had had personal opportunities of witnessing the horrors of Southern American slavery; and from what I have seen and known, I suppose his statement to be in no wise overcharged" (2).

<sup>18</sup> Dialogue is also a feature of The Life, as exemplified in an exchange between a beggar and Edmund's paternal grandparents:

Like all prudent housewives, Mrs. Gosse had a strong aversion to tramps. Her husband, on the contrary, was . . . easy . . . prey to them. . . . Once, when the family was at dinner, a beggar strolled to the door; the maid came in and told the tale. My grandmother refused--"Nothing for him!" But grandfather's soft compassionate heart stayed the denial. "Oh yes! here's a halfpenny for the poor man." The beggar who, through the open parlour-door, had heard all, shouted in, as he took the copper, "God bless the man,--but not the woman!" (14-15).

In The Life, Thomas Gosse plays the time-worn character of the hen-pecked husband (like Joe Gargery in Great Expectations), and he is much put upon to give up his literary pretensions and stop what his wife called "that cursed writin'" (The Life of PHG 14). Thus the sin of story-telling is definitive on both sides of the Gosse family, making poetic ambition on the part of Thomas' son and grandson all the more understandable, considering their ancestor's failed literary career.

<sup>19</sup> The following account of a Jamaica butterfly chase in The Romance of Natural History will serve as a sample of Philip's poetic "biographies" of natural creatures:

a gorgeous butterfly rushes out of the gloom into the sunny glade, and is in a moment seen to be a novelty; then comes the excitement of pursuit; the disappointment of seeing it dance over a thicket out of sight; the joy of finding it reappear . . . the breathless eagerness with which the net is poised; and the triumphant flush with which we contemplate the painted wings within the gauze; and the admiration with which we gaze on its loveliness when held in the trembling fingers (273).

<sup>20</sup> In Edmund Gosse's Coventry Patmore (1905), Patmore, like Philip Gosse, refuses to be influenced by Tennyson (51).

<sup>21</sup> Edmund here resembles Eugene Marchbanks, the Pre-Raphaelite anti-hero of Shaw's Candida. Marchbanks, an aristocratic young poet, describes what he would like to give to his beloved Candida: "No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat: a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun" (129).

<sup>22</sup> Emily also quotes Wordsworth in the preface to Abraham and His Children (iii).

<sup>23</sup> The son's "ontological insecurity" seems to go as far back as he can remember, even to his birth. This state of being is described by R.D. Laing in The Divided Self (1969), who characterizes the ontologically insecure "self" as something which, in extreme cases, becomes "more and more

phantasticized as it becomes more and more engaged in phantastic relationships with its own phantoms (imagos)" (Laing 85). Thus the self becomes a ghost, an unreal or imaginary creation. For instance, one of Laing's case studies, Julie, uses imagery that is similar to Edmund's when she describes her mental condition: "'She's the ghost of the weed garden'" (Laing 204-205).

<sup>24</sup> This passage can be compared to Edmund's recollection of striding by the sea with the subject of Coventry Patmore (154-55). He seems to have a crush on Patmore.

<sup>25</sup> Although in an 1884 letter to his friend Hamo Thornycroft, Edmund remembers his mother on the beach at Tenby, Wales: "You know that I take little interest in Parents as a rule; I think them a mistake, but I make an exception in my unfortunate mother with her morbid intensity and her touch of genius. If you see her ghost in the Valley of the Rocks, you will know her, for I am her image in features" (Thwaite 240). The Gosse family took two holidays to Tenby, one in 1854 and then another in 1856. The first excursion was the inspiration for Philip Gosse's Tenby: A Sea-side Holiday (1856), which combines autobiography, natural history, and travel writing.

## Chapter five Edmund Gosse's Biographies

Edmund Gosse "read" himself into the biography of his father, and he continued to read the lives of other men tropologically, as can be seen from a selection of biographies and essays that he wrote in the twenty-five years leading up to the publication of Father and Son in 1907. These years saw Gosse growing in stature as a man of letters and "eminent Victorian". In 1886, he experienced a setback in the form of an attack on his critical accuracy from a contemporary critic, Churton Collins<sup>1</sup>, but he eventually managed to recover his reputation and later assume the title of House of Lords Librarian in 1904. The Edmund Gosse of this period is an established literary figure, whose biographical projects bear the authority of a recognized member of the London literary establishment. That Gosse was commissioned to write the entire section on English Literature in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1902-1903 testifies to his high prestige.

Gosse's full-length biographical works--from Gray (1882) to Ibsen (1907)--will constitute the main focus of study for this chapter, which seeks to examine Gosse's general attitudes towards biography and biographers, as well as his propensity to write autobiography in his biographies. The "freedom" to write autobiography stemmed from Gosse's ability to command an artist's (and typologist's) right to wield authority over his biographical materials. He was determined to define his poets and artists on his own terms, even if that meant creating their profile in his own image--

in effect writing "fiction". For Gosse, biographical writing became a means of creating and projecting images of himself and his father into the written lives of men he admired. As in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S., Edmund borrowed from typological tradition to abrogate to himself the right to impose his own definitions on another person's life, in unconscious revenge for the way in which his parents wrote his life. He conceived the role of the biographer to be that of an artist who has the authority to select, compose, and shape, just as Emily perceived her procreative role to be that of an architect.

The biographies also resemble the 1890 Life in that they provide a ghostly script of Father and Son, something which is an outgrowth of the tropological training Edmund received--allowing him to read other lives as if they were his own. The biographies, especially the ones published between 1890 and 1907, provide a testing ground or control group for the working out of specific conflicts which surface in Father and Son. Imitation versus originality, religion versus literature, father versus son--all of these battles are rehearsed in biographies like The Life and Letters of John Donne (1899), Jeremy Taylor (1904), Coventry Patmore (1905), and Ibsen (1907). Many of the biographies foreshadow Father and Son's portrayal of the antagonism between Puritanism and aestheticism, providing Edmund with an early forum to air his views about the philistine nature of the Puritan tradition. The biographies provide contextual background for Gosse's later criticism in Father and Son that his parents lacked imaginative capacity.

## I. Gosse's Conception of the Biographer's Role.

Just as Philip Gosse and Anna Shipton were concerned to justify their memoirs in terms of the "purest" of religious motives, so also Edmund tries to justify the genre of biography as a whole and rescue it from the hands of amateurs who might sully or tarnish its name. Just after the turn of the century, Gosse appealed to the reading public in The Anglo-Saxon Review (1901) and Encyclopedia Britannica (1902) to recognize certain professional standards in biography. He outlined his philosophy towards biography more fully in the Anglo-Saxon Review article, "The Custom of Biography", as the biography section in the Encyclopedia article was only a paragraph long<sup>2</sup>. In "The Custom of Biography", Gosse declares that the "real essence of the art of biography" and its "sole aim" is to provide a "clear-coloured portrait of the man set against the dim background of his age" (197). What makes this portrait come into focus is "the little traits and personal characteristics of individuals" (198)--revealing a certain bias towards psychology that is often detrimental to historical context. The preface to the first volume of The Life and Letters of John Donne provides an example of Gosse's biographical ambition: "I have desired . . . to present a portrait of him as a man and an author . . . what I have essayed to present, is a biographical and critical monograph on Donne in his full complexity" (I xvi)<sup>3</sup>.

If the biographer is a portrait painter, what is his role in relation to the "sitter"? When Gosse considers the

relationship between biographer and biographee, he seems to be ambivalent about how close he wants to get to his subjects (raising the question of whether they are to be "interpreted" tropologically or objectively). In the preface to Robert Browning; Personalialia (1890), he argues that curiosity about a person's literary self is less vulgar than prurient interest in his "everyday" self. He claims that:

No one is more alive . . . than I, to the indelicacy of the efforts now only too frequently made to pry into the private affairs of a man of genius, to peep over his shoulder as he writes to his intimate friends, and to follow him like a detective through the incidents of a life which should not be less sacred from curiosity than the life of his butler or his baker (17).

Here the biographer is a sneaky voyeur, a snoop who does not recognize the sanctity of privacy and personal correspondence. But literary history, Gosse asserts, is a different story. That "most charming of all occupations of the human mind . . . is a very different thing from personal history, and there are certain facts about the development of a poet's intellect . . . about which curiosity is perfectly legitimate" (17-18).

Yet it is often difficult to separate out the literary man from the everyday one, and therefore to decide which kind of curiosity is legitimate or not. Why is it more acceptable to "peep over" a man's shoulder when he's writing a poem than when he is writing a letter? When is curiosity ever legitimate and how is it to be distinguished from the appetite for gossip? Gosse's solution to the problem is to conflate the biographical with the literary, reading a man's

artistic creations as if they confessed the story of his autobiography. He utilized this reading method in many of his biographies.

As Thwaite records, Gosse's Donne was criticized for its overly biographical method of criticism:

It was Gosse's enthusiastic use of the poems as biographical evidence in reconstructing Donne's early life which caused more criticism of the book than the inevitable errors and carelessnesses (398).

The critics refused to sanction Gosse's defence of the biographical method in the Donne biography: "I believe that in few cases in literary history is that method more legitimate than here" (I 62)<sup>4</sup>. Gosse's use of the word "legitimate" resonates with the passage from Robert Browning: Personalia about "legitimate" curiosity, conjuring up images associated with orthodoxy, bastardy, Biblical rivalries, and personal ethics. Gosse is concerned to provide a respectable pedigree for his pet subject.

The problem of legitimacy in relation to the biographical approach to art hinges on general questions concerning authorial intention and the degree of intimacy between an author and his or her creative work. The same problem is present in the construction of a biography, i.e. to what degree is the author present in the person he is biographizing? Gosse's trouble was that he assumed too much insight into the mind of the artist, just as his father had complete faith in his insight into the mind of God. Gosse tended to read life in terms of art and art in terms of life, something he learned from his parents, who read life in terms of the Bible and vice versa. Edmund's biographical



method stems from the same kind of tropological readings of the scriptures which made Emily Gosse personally chastize Jonathan the Levite in Abraham and His Children and dedicate her son to the Lord in imitation of Hannah. Furthermore, this blurring of distinctions between life and text is carried through in Father and Son, where typological expectations come to impose their "literary" restrictions on the pattern of his life.

Typological and tropological thinking encourages a certain confusion between life and the Bible, thus making it difficult to disentangle the two. Edmund Gosse brought this typological conundrum to the reading and writing of poet's lives. Like Gosse, Donne seemed aware of and perhaps resigned to this confusion between self and textual image, and Gosse's biographical method could be compared to a letter Donne wrote to an aristocrat: "I deliver this paper as my image" (II 147)<sup>5</sup>.

Yet, on Gosse's part, the conflation of a writer's work with his life could be a deliberate attempt to create biographical material where there was none before. The performance of an ostensible duty of public commemoration could in fact be disguising a certain cavalier attitude towards the story of another person's life. The biographer who reserves the right to read his subject's poems autobiographically is a hermeneutical autocrat, disciplining the welter of literary material and forcing it to follow an artificial pattern. The authority of the biographer is also that of a typological practitioner, who imposes Biblical patterns on individual identity and experience. This is the

coercive, even violent, side of typology, which sees its materials in terms of pliability, passivity, and plastic form. The model for this kind of biographical typology is Anna Shipton, who forced Emily into the role of female Christ.

Biography's typological and tropological tendencies, especially as exemplified in a narrative like Tell Jesus!, could point towards a "scriptural" definition of the genre. One could go so far as to call biography an inspired narrative, something that is suggested in the way in which Gosse reifies many of his biographees as saints, prophets, and Biblical figures. Support for the notion of the inspired author can be found in Donne's thoughts about speech and writing in a letter to the Countess of Montgomery:

I know what dead carcasses things written are in respect of things spoken. But in things of this kind, that soul that inanimates them never departs from them: The Spirit of God that dictates them in the speaker or writer, and is present in his tongue or hand, meets himself again (as we meet ourselves in a glass) in the eyes and ears and hearts of the hearers and readers (II 123).

Typology and tropology enter the picture here to provide an essential link between the writers of scripture and the writers of sermons. Yet this confidence in the spirit of God as inspiration can lead, and I would argue does lead in Gosse's case, to the abrogation of divine authority to human authors<sup>6</sup>. The biographer becomes a maker and a prophet, the shaper of memory and god-like composer of his subject's life. He assumes the typologist's power to define identity.

Gosse's conception of the biographer is essentially an artistic one, a conception which unconsciously complements the "creative" (yet often abusive) role of a typological practitioner in relation to his subject. In his concern to "paint a picture", Gosse claims for himself the role of a visual artist--someone who has visions, a "seer". The light by which he views the objects of his study is the light of the imagination. And his imagination often transforms the poet into another version of himself. In Versions of Pygmalion (1990), J. Hillis Miller explains that Pygmalion's sin, like Gosse's, was to love his own image in his art, which is the sin of narcissism (4-5). By worshipping a false idol--the poet or writer whom Gosse loved enough to immortalize in print and create in his own image--the latter performs a heretical act that is the literary equivalent to his early experiment in chair worship (F&S 66-67). Heretical or not, painting a biographical portrait can be read as a secular sacrament, elevating a life to the realms of artistic creation.

If biography is a portrait, it might also be described as a funeral effigy. Donne calls the written word "a dead carcass" (II 123), and in the twentieth century the relationship between death and art has been examined by Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) and critics like Peter Brooks in Reading for the Plot (1984). Writing becomes a means of "repetition and return", the desire which propels it forward always yearning to relapse into inorganic quiet, simultaneously seeking satisfaction and annihilation.

Donne's stage management of his own funeral, which Gosse describes in The Life and Letters of John Donne, is illustrative of the necrophiliac element in art; it also resembles the shaping vision that the biographer imposes on the life of his subject. Donne's supervision of the construction of his funeral effigy is described by Donne's first biographer, Izaak Walton: "Dr. Donne sent for a carver to make for him in wood the figure of an urn. . . . then without delay a choice painter was got to be in readiness to draw his picture". Donne arranged the scene in his study and

brought with him into that place his winding-sheet in his hand and . . . had this sheet put on him, and so tied with knots at his head and feet, and his hands so placed as dead bodies are usually fitted, to be shrouded and put into their coffin or grave. Upon this urn he thus stood, with his eyes shut, and with so much of the sheet turned aside as might show his lean, pale, and death-like face, which was purposely turned toward the east . . ." (II 281).

In addition to directing the production of his funeral monument, Donne wrote his own epitaph (II 281), putting an autobiographical impulse into practice.

Seconds before Donne died, he "disposed his hands and body into such a posture, as required not the least alteration by those that came to shroud him" (II 284), thus imitating the composition of the sculpture and the expected arrangement of his limbs after death. The art of arrangement and composition, of "fixing" life into a certain pattern, is the art of autobiography and biography. It is a performance, and in Donne's case a "piece of public tragedy" (II 286). Gosse places Donne's tragedy in the context of the Renaissance perception of life as a stage (II 286), but

this theatrical presentation of death could be applied to Gosse's own biographical and autobiographical performances in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the latter author, performance is related to religious ritual.

Gosse opens "The Custom of Biography" with a cross-cultural examination of funeral rites:

Various nations have diverse ways of building the tombs of their prophets. . . . We in England bury our dead under the monstrous catafalque of two volumes (crown octavo), and go forth refreshed, as those who have performed a rite which is not in itself beautiful, perhaps, but is inevitable and eminently decent (195).

The image of rite and sacrament is consistent with Gosse's essentially religious and artistic conception of biography. Just as he makes literature into a substitute religion in Father and Son, so Gosse surrounds his poetic biographees with an aura of sanctity and worship. This worshipful element lends the biographies a "scriptural" quality, or at least a devotional character which is reminiscent of a literary pilgrim or writer of hagiography.

For Gosse, the death of a poet was a tragic event and deserved a poetic response. His fascination with the morbid side of poetry can be traced back to his attraction to the eighteenth-century Funeral Poets which his father allowed him to read on Sundays, "If you can!" (F&S 197). The four poems in the collection were: "'The Last Day' of Dr. Young, Blair's 'Grave', 'Death' by Bishop Beilby Porteus, and 'The Deity' of Samuel Boyse" (F&S 196), and Edmund was especially taken with 'Grave', frightening himself "with its melodious doleful images in earnest" (198). These poems constituted

some of Gosse's earliest poetic influences and offered a means of establishing an alternative identity to the Samuel he was expected to become. Gosse's later interest in biography could be interpreted as an outgrowth of this early fascination with artful representations of death and as an expression of his independence from typological expectations. Instead of being written by someone else's life, Gosse put himself in charge of writing the lives of other people. Yet the irony is that he must rely on the typological training he received in order to perform these counter-attacks of biographical and typological writing.

As a biographer, Gosse himself achieves the status of funeral poet, as can be illustrated in a passage from the epilogue to Robert Browning: Personalia. Here, he declares his intention to quote "some verses by Ronsard, which Robert Browning loved, and which I have heard him repeat with enthusiasm", asking rhetorically: "May I quote them here, in the quaint old spelling, and throw them, like a posy of violets, on the marble of his tomb?" (95). The "verses" of Gosse's own book serve as a tribute, a commemorative bouquet to be offered as a sacrifice at the altar of Browning's tomb. A sterner, more objective, biographer would not bother with poetic posy-throwing.

Yet the negative side of funeral art is the attempt to turn the subjects of biographies into objects, using a book of their life as an attempt to ensure that they remain dead. It is as if they are pinned down and labelled for eternity, once their biography has been written. Poetry and biography make "dead carcasses" of things by committing them to the

tomb of written language, a tomb which is also suggestive of the dark side of typology, in its effort to exercise absolute authority over the objects of interpretation (even if that means "killing" them). The biographer attempts to fix his subject in time and space, just as Donne's sculptor placed him upright on an urn in order to immortalize his image. Paul de Man remarks upon the potentially exploitative nature of autobiography in The Rhetoric of Romanticism (1984):

Prosopopeia is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name . . . is made as intelligible and memorable as a face. Our topic deals with the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, figure, figuration, and disfiguration (76).

This exchange of faces can be read in the context of the biographical process as well. The biographer chooses one face to present and thus renounces the possibility of other facets or faces, not to mention the possibility of granting the subject the chance to preserve a subjectivity and liveliness of his own'. The biographer's "figuration" and possible disfiguration of his subject is reminiscent of typology's shaping figuration of types and antitypes (as explained in Auerbach's essay "Figura").

### II.i. Biography as a Servant's Art.

Edmund resented his parents' definition of himself as Samuel, servant of the Lord, and he criticized them for their lack of imaginative sympathy. Yet the irony is that Edmund merely exchanged service to the Lord for service to poets; in his role as biographer he prostrated himself

before their greatness. Moreover, to deepen the irony even further, Edmund's efforts to defend biography and transform it into art was a defence he never extended to his parents' autobiographical and biographical writings (revealing a certain double standard on his part). Thus he remains within their typological definition of himself--servant, "scripture-writer"--but nevertheless tries to call his subservience by another name.

Gosse claims for the biographer the status of artist, or at the very least that of a professional writer who has a sense of narrative structure and composition. He composes "The Custom of Biography" in hopes of shoring up authority and dignity, even sanctity, for the biographical vocation. Outlining the history of English biography, he explains how in the early eighteenth century:

The composition of personal memoirs was abandoned to 'virulent party hacks who wrote for hire,' and it was not consistent with the dignity of any recognised man of letters to collect, before it was too late, a series of particulars regarding such giants of the preceding age as Dryden and Locke (CB 201).

Here, the biographer takes his position on the lowest scale in the literary chain of being; he is a hack who prostitutes his skill, his only possible excuse being the necessity to feed his family (CB 205). Gosse himself is a man of letters anxious to defend his sense of dignity, and therefore he is keen to clean biography up and take it upstairs, finding a place for it in the study next to respectable volumes of criticism and poetry. He plays Professor Higgins to biography's Eliza Doolittle.



Gosse is grateful to Middleton's 'Life of Cicero' for making biography "respectable" and "independent" (CB 202) and to Boswell's 'Life of Johnson' for making it more beautiful:

His two quarto volumes--so handsome in type and format, with the beautiful frontispiece after Reynolds . . . removed for ever, in their magnificent celebrity, the stigma that until then had never ceased to rest upon biography as a kind of literature not quite worthy of a gentleman (CB 202).

Yet this raises the question of whether biography needs more than a beautiful cover to afford it the status of art. Not even Boswell's "handsome volumes" were enough to completely erase the taint that biography languished under, a stigma which remained even in Gosse's own era<sup>8</sup>.

Biography is a servant's art and never a master's. This perception of biography was frequently held by contemporaries of Gosse, as illustrated in a scene from Coventry Patmore. When someone suggested that Patmore write a memoir of a dead acquaintance he "was "aghast" at the proposition and did all he could to dissuade the lady, but she was firm in insisting. "I could not refuse," Patmore said, "though it was a task little suited to me" (137). One suspects the task did not suit him because it was beneath the dignity of an aristocratic poet like himself.

The eighteenth-century prejudice against the biographer reviles him as "a pariah" who was "not in the inner circle of letters" (CB 205). In this sense, biographers could be compared to their disinherited brothers--Cain, Ishmael, or Esau--who are doomed to be outcasts or outlaws on the margins of the Promised Land of legitimate literary

endeavour. Biographers are bastards, but Gosse is determined to make their story over into a fairy tale--one where the younger son wins the father's blessing or the servant girl wins the prince--an enchanted story that overturns the preconceived expectations of the genre.

Before Boswell arrived on the scene, biography was considered "work fit for a drudge only" (CB 203). But Gosse seems to see biography as the Cinderella of literature. He complains that the biographer-as-drudge idea has persisted into the nineteenth century, the populace assuming:

that no one is too great a fool, or too complete an amateur, or too thoroughly ignorant of the modes of composition, to undertake the 'life' of an eminent person. This I believe to be a survival of the old ignominy under which biography so long suffered (CB 205).

By implication, the "true" biographer (and Gosse himself) is a skilled professional who writes well-crafted narratives. Although he has been regarded as a fool and a drudge, he is really a prince in disguise. His martyrdom to literature will be recognized when readers understand the literary gifts that are necessary for the composition of biography.

Gosse wants to claim for himself and other biographers a certain singularity and distinction, even a cachet, thus defending them from the charges he made against his parents, i.e. that they lack sympathetic imagination. When he writes his biographies, Gosse often projects himself into the lives of his subjects, "forcing" himself on them in emotional intimacy. For example, Thwaite records how passionately involved Edmund became with his Gray:

On 13th March 1882 Gosse wrote to Austin Dobson: 'I am in a great state of agitation. I have just written the death of Gray, with inexpressible

excitement. I have been crying, so that my tears blinded the page--how ridiculous--tears for a little man who died more than a hundred years ago (233)<sup>9</sup>.

Gosse's tears for Gray are reminiscent of the kind of Evangelical relationship to Jesus which Landow describes in Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows (17), in which the Christian is encouraged to shed tears for a man who died more than nineteen hundred years ago.

Gosse's brand of imaginative sympathy could also be read as Romantic in nature. Moreover, the romantic perception of the artist as one who stands alone, writing for himself and not for the public, is one which Gosse would like to appropriate for the biographer. Like a poet, a biographer is an Individual, even though he is in danger of merging with his subject matter. Gosse reacts strongly against the "popular conviction that any one can write a 'Life'" and that "biography is supposed to need no skill, no art, no experience of any kind" (CB 205). He closes "The Custom of Biography" with a resounding apology for biography:

It is not an art which ought to be relegated to amateurs. It should not be taken for granted that it requires no skill or tact or experience in its execution. On the contrary, there is no species of writing which requires the exercise of a finer sense of proportion, of a keener appreciation of the relative value of things and men, or of a deeper sense of literary responsibility (208).

Gosse is defending his territory here, combining self-advertisement with a certain righteous irritation at the amateurs who presume to make biography a democratic province of artistic enterprise<sup>10</sup>.

## II.ii. Moral Justifications for The Art of Biography and the Biographical Bastards and Liars who Undermine Them.

Edmund justified the writing of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse by claiming that it was his duty to "represent him exactly as I knew him and have found him" (viii). Fifteen years later, Edmund repeated this assertion in his biography of Coventry Patmore: "those who observed him closely are not merely justified in setting forth their observations, but have a duty to do so" (177). Here, biography, formerly the genre of prurient hacks, has been lifted from the mud and transformed into a moral duty, Gosse stressing the importance of truth over flattery and the necessity to paint Patmore "exactly as he was" (177). The historical exemplar of "biographical purity" is Boswell, "who faithfully records every manifestation of the character of his subject, believing that character, in its nudity, to be a perfectly worthy theme for our respectful attention" (CB 200).

Character is interesting in its own right, not for the capacity it has to morally improve the reader (and not because it might be an expression of typological authority).

Boswell's biographical activity is in opposition to that of the prudish widow's, to whom "we owe the fact that a very large section of recent biography might pass for an annex to Madame Tussaud's gallery" (CB 206)<sup>11</sup>. However, could it be said that all biographers are widows? Biographers--like widows and sons--"inherit" a dead man's papers and act as a representative or stand-in for his memory. The responsibility for preserving the memory of the preceding

generations belongs to the survivors (just as Gosse's longevity put him in this position by merit of outliving the great Victorians he wrote about). And if a biographer is primarily an artist, who is to say that the difference between a widow's lies and the biographer/son's lies are not simply a matter of style instead of truth?

In addition to the principles of fidelity and honesty, Gosse recommends for the biographer a healthy indifference to the sensibilities of surviving family members (CB 207). But he does not recommend "the cultivation of biography as a form of revenge" (CB 208). This is ironic coming from the author of Father and Son, a book which accuses Philip Gosse of a number of paternal crimes. Moreover, by writing a series of biographies about men who are not his father, he seems to reproach Philip, something which is particularly evident in the stories he tells about encouraging fathers who have faith in their sons' genius<sup>12</sup> (unlike Philip, who seemed to be more interested in Edmund's soul than his poetic talents). Edmund complained about his father's lack of encouragement as early as 1868. In a letter dated January 13 of that year he writes to his father:

you seem rather to take for granted that I have not the least chance of success [at poetry] simply from the authority of a young critic of whom you know nothing. This inclines me to believe that you have long thought the same. . . . That being the case, I, the drivelling poetaster, must try to turn my useless hands to something better. Never! Poetry or nothing . . . . I constantly ask you for real analytical criticism, and you never give it . . . (letter #42 in Letters Father and Son, CUL Manuscript Room).

Although Edmund does not consciously seek direct "revenge" on his father or the literary figures he

memorializes, nevertheless an element of vengeful wit can be detected in many of his biographies. In his Life and Letters of John Donne, Edmund described Donne as a writer of "a series of humorous and sardonic portraits of types" (I 37). Here, Donne could be identified as an ancestor of Gosse, whose ironic style of portraiture is usually gentle, but can have a sharp edge to it.

Despite the elegant credentials Gosse claims for them, some of the biographers who appear in his biographies really are "bastards". In Gray, a certain Mason is criticized for his ambition and for posing "as Gray's representative and confidant" (208) after his death. During Gray's lifetime, Mason imitated Gray's poems and tried to ingratiate himself to him through flattery. He took liberties with Gray's letters (215) after his death, thus taking poetic license too far. Even Boswell, who is a more respectable representative of biography, was perceived to be "a lacquey, a low fellow, a writer of the life of a great man whom he had toadied" (CB 203). And the same criticism could easily apply to Gosse, considering his studied cultivation of literary friendships through the same methods that Mason employed<sup>13</sup>. It is possible that the defensive stance that Gosse adopts in "The Custom of Biography" sprang from his own uneasy perception of himself as a disciple who toadied and flattered his way into the confidence of literary men.

Yet what some call political fawning others could call boyish hero worship. Mason and Gosse, as well as Donne's first biographer Walton, are all hero worshippers who channelled their devotion into biographical activity

(resembling Anna Shipton and her adoration of Emily). Yet Gosse cautions against blind worship such as Cavendish expressed in his 'Life of Cardinal Wolsey', "whom he worshipped . . . like Agave in the weird Cadmean forest, 'gazing, an insatiate bride, on [Wolsey's] form from every side'. The result is that he loses, with an enchanting carelessness, any sense of proportion" (CB 197). Agave, who killed her son, foreshadows the art of the biographer, a being whose shaping gaze "kills" those whom he worships--possessing and defining the subject according to his own ideals. Despite his official reservations about Cavendish, Gosse is also guilty of losing proportion and perspective on the objects of his insatiate gaze.

Walton, who seemed to have a literary infatuation with Donne, is not a "pure" biographer in the Boswellian sense. Gosse notes the inconsistencies between Walton's claims to truthful artlessness and his saintly portrayal of Donne, but is nevertheless indulgent towards him, even though Walton's monograph on Donne "is wilfully and purposely drawn out of focus" (Donne II 317). Biographers like Walton serve to confirm the prejudices of the "Englishman of the old type" who had "a grounded suspicion of the veracity of memoirs. He feared that, 'with their blasphemous trump, they spread abroad innumerable lies, without either shame or honesty" (CB 196). In tandem with the traditional Englishman, I would like to claim for the biographer the role of liar, although a liar in the artistic sense, after Oscar Wilde. Moreover, the artistry of biographical lying is very similar to the "blasphemous trump" of A Memorial and Tell Jesus!, in

that typological practitioners and biographers both impose their version of a story according to a unique vision of their own, be it literary or typological.

### III. The Biographer as Artistic Liar and Autobiographer.

In Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" (1889), the artist who imposes his individual style and personality on his work is greater than the one who lets the spirit of his subject dominate: "The only portraits in which one believes are portraits where there is very little of the sitter and a very great deal of the artist" (Wilde 989). If Gosse's biographies are read according to Wilde's criteria, then they fall more or less squarely into the artistic camp. This is because it is possible to read his biographies as autobiographies. Some of them are more congenial to this method of reading than others, but throughout his biographical corpus, Gosse insists on making his presence known to the reader. He makes his mark on the subjects of his biographies, exercising authority over them in the same coercive way that the etymology of typology suggests: stamping, marking, and tatooing the types of poets with his own literary brand.

Despite the conventional disclaimers that he is dutifully writing at the earnest request of bishops, scholars<sup>14</sup>, and the reading public<sup>15</sup>, Gosse is the self-conscious professional biographer and artist that he argues in defence of in "The Custom of Biography". For instance, he claims that the credit for the first section of Robert Browning:



Personalia should go to Browning: "so little [of it] is mine, that I have felt it would be mock-modesty to refuse my consent"(3-4)<sup>16</sup>. (His consent refers to the permission to reprint the first section of the book from The Century Magazine of December 1881 (3)). Yet the second half of the short biography is called "Personal Impressions" and it gives Gosse the opportunity to put himself back into the narrative, abruptly galvanizing his style into an expansion of its literary qualities and giving him license to express his more fanciful impressions. The biographical persona of the "Personal Impressions" variety suits Gosse better (and is more honest) than the self-denying figure of the first part of Robert Browning. The subjective and "literary" version of the biographer allies him with the Wildean conception of the artistic liar<sup>17</sup>.

In Coventry Patmore, autobiography meets biography in a blatant manner when Gosse reaches the point in Patmore's life which marks their first meeting. Thus, more than halfway through the book, Gosse jumps into the story with the words: "It may be convenient here for me to take up this little history from a more intimate standpoint" (152). It is not certain for whom this standpoint is convenient--the writer or the reader--but the first-person intrusion certainly makes the biography come more alive. Gosse's honesty pulls the reader up short when he describes his first encounter with Patmore: "he made a highly disagreeable impression on me; I thought him harsh and sardonic; he said little, and what he said was bitter" (152-53).

Gosse changed his mind about the poet after he became better acquainted, and he ended up making many "pilgrimages" to Patmore's home in Hastings. Gosse describes in purple colours one particular night walk by the sea with Patmore:

We sallied forth into the gloom of the faintly-twinkling town, and descended swiftly to the sea-wall. The night was fine, with buffeting wind, the remnant of a great storm; the tide was high, and it was difficult to pass along the Parade without being drenched by the fountains of spray which rose, mysterious and phantasmal, out of the resounding darkness. My companion was in an ecstasy. . . . He seemed, to my fancy, to be the enchanter whose magic had raised all this turmoil of the elements, and to be empowered, at will, to quiet it all in a moment (154-53)<sup>18</sup>.

Biographical "truth" does not require that we know that Patmore was a rain dancer or that the ocean was "phantasmal", but Gosse does adhere to his biographical commitment to "paint a portrait" here. That he does it in novelistic style--setting the scene, describing the atmosphere---does not make the portrait less clear.

Nevertheless, it is helpful to establish certain boundaries between biography and fiction, if only to define the differences between the two. One of Gosse's friends, Arthur Benson, thought Gosse's biographies were the worse for ignoring these distinctions. Benson was often critical of Gosse, as evidenced in his private response to the proofs of Coventry Patmore:

They [the proofs] are delicate and subtle of course--full of colour and movement, but the book is not somehow satisfactory. Gosse will put himself forward . . . . The sticking of the autobiographical element in, in patches, is not nice. It is the need of skipping and posturing before the people, of bowing them in to the show, of wanting to get a recognition of your own cleverness, that is so distressing (Thwaite 415).

Coventry Patmore was published in 1905, but an earlier criticism of Gosse's autobiographical "egotism" occurred in Churton Collins' devastating review of Gosse's From Shakespeare to Pope (1885) in The Quarterly Review of October 1886: "Indeed, there is nothing in Mr. Gosse's volume more annoying than his habit of perpetually thrusting himself into prominence where there is no occasion for it" (302).

Benson implicitly agrees with Collins, observing that Gosse's intrusions seem to be self-serving rather than providing a means to better describe the subject of his biography. When biography becomes an excuse to write autobiography and fiction, there is too much I and not enough Thou. For Benson, Gosse rebels against his role of servant to literary greatness to too great an extent--turning service into masterful self-promotion.

#### IV.i. The Shaping Art of the Biographer: The Aesthetic, Literary, and "Sacred" Qualities of Gosse's Biographies.

If a biographer tells lies, how does he set about telling them in an artistic fashion? Gosse's narrative priorities fall under the rubric of "proportion and selection" (CB 206), aesthetic techniques which become particularly crucial for the composition of biography, partly because of the welter of material the modern biographer finds himself sorting through (CB 207). The author must necessarily pick and choose, deciding which events fall "naturally" into narrative form and sequence and which ones should be

rejected in the interest of over-all harmony and balance. Yet the notions of proportion and selection can be interpreted in a larger sense. Proportion implies a preconceived "classical" pattern of balance and harmony of parts. And selection implies decisive shaping on the part of the author, a propensity to shape the "plastic form" of raw materials into a particular form. This is the art of typology. Moreover, the aesthetic concepts that apply to typology, painting, poetry, and fiction can be applied to biography as well: order, pattern, balance, and discipline in regard to one's material. A biography must have a beginning, middle, and an end and must conform to certain standards of narrative structure.

Gosse's conception of biography is an aesthetic one, and he interpreted the meaning of writers' lives through the lens of art. The biographies which precede Father and Son show evidence of this artistic or literary world-view in a variety of ways. And Father and Son itself bears the author's aesthetic trademark, as it tells the story of how a misunderstood boy learned to "read" experience poetically instead of theologically.

Following his principle of "selection", Gosse first takes stock of his potential biographical candidates and separates the sheep from the goats. Whom he selects can say much about Gosse himself, the very choice open to being read in autobiographical terms. The subjects of almost all of his biographies and essays are men. They are primarily poets (Gray, Raleigh, Browning, Donne, Spenser, Patmore, Swinburne) and dramatists (Lodge, Congreve, Ibsen), with a

few visual artists (Lawson, Tinworth), scientists (Philip Gosse, Browne), preachers (Donne, Taylor) and aristocrats (Queen Victoria, Lord Cromer) to round out the composite picture.

If Gosse's choice of subjects reflects upon his literary self-image, then the biography of the male poet is the one that he would most like to pattern his own autobiography after. Moreover, biography became a means of presenting a series of literary fathers, and the progenitors Gosse prefers are poets and not spiritual autobiographers like Bunyan (whom he studiously avoids). His biographies of Bunyan's literary contemporaries reflect without fail his desire to be on the side of the arts and literature, thus supporting the Royalists' struggle against the prosaic Roundheads. With the exception of his father, Gosse refuses to biographize a single Puritan, although some of the seventeenth-century men he chooses do have some Puritan qualities<sup>19</sup> (just as Philip Gosse possesses many "poetic" qualities).

Gosse claims for his biography-men the same individuality and singular status as the biographer himself. When choosing the protagonist of a biography, "it should be necessary to satisfy one's self that the subject possessed qualities . . . so unlike those of other men as to justify his being raised from their ranks" (CB 206). Biography is only for the elect, for men who are worth reading about because they stand, like King David, head and shoulders above the rest. Here, biography makes a contribution towards the sacredness of the individual, in that it asserts

difference, uniqueness, and singularity. The life of one individual is important enough, independent of historical and didactic contexts, to be examined and written about in detail--perhaps one of the effects of Puritan autobiography and literature which Gosse failed to acknowledge.

Biography is a means of elevating the individual to divine status, but it is not democratic in its choice of subjects; an individual must have characteristics which distinguish him from the crowd. In Gosse's body of work, men like Philip Gosse, Donne, and Patmore are depicted as almost god-like figures. Their divine gifts justify the romantic apotheosis that biography bestows on them as a tribute to their greatness. They are "raised" to a height that is inaccessible to the masses, transforming biography from the lackey of literature into the vehicle of aristocratic and poetic ideals.

When Gosse selects the subjects of his biographies, he chooses artistic men whose poetic qualifications match his own. In Cecil Lawson: A Memoir (1883), Gosse's biography of a nineteenth-century landscape painter, the aesthetic philosophy of Lawson's seventeenth-century predecessors is described in approving tones:

Their idea of landscape was of a thing formed in their hands, developed by their intelligence, altered and restrained by the laws of composition. Whether the principle of selection be paramount over the imitation of nature . . . it is always at the root of every painter's conception of his art (3).

As for Lawson himself, it "was always repugnant . . . to make an exact copy of nature; he invariably composed and selected" (34, emphasis added). Gosse's conception of

himself as an artist seems to mirror that of Lawson and his aesthetic ancestors. Nature must play second fiddle to the shaping power of the artist, a conception of art that complements the philosophy of Wilde and Joyce, as well as the typological practices of Puritans like the Plymouth Brethren. The words "formed", "developed", "altered and restrained" suggest the pliable nature of the materials in contrast to the creative authority of the artist; the materials are "plastic form" in the hands of a painter, poet, architect, or typologist. Here, the artist imitates the God of Genesis who creates the world out of nothing and a man out of mud.

The artist's power should not be constrained by the nature of his or her raw materials, even if these materials are considered sacred. For example, Gosse admires the authoritative attitude that Jeremy Taylor took towards typology (an attitude which typology itself encourages in relation to the Hebrew Scriptures and individual persons). When Taylor wrote The Great Exemplar in 1649, he took liberties with the story of Jesus's life: "the author tells the story as he chooses. There is no attempt at Biblical criticism . . . Taylor selects such versions of the narrative as best suit his purpose" and he "dwells upon . . . the imaginative and the pathetic" elements in Christ's story (JT 58-59, emphasis added). The conception of the artist which most appeals to Gosse is the one that gives him the greatest freedom over his subject matter. He inherited this conception from his parents and typological practitioners like Anna Shipton who selected Biblical

stories which "best suited her purposes". The abuse of typology angered Gosse--the tendency to take advantage of the freedom of interpretation that it offers--but he readily adopts this very "sin" in his own writing.

Gosse never consciously invents new stories about the men he turns into biographies, but he takes stylistic liberties with their life-stories, often making them read as fiction<sup>20</sup>. As discussed in chapter four, the problem of "fictional techniques and factual works" has been explored by William Siebenschuh in a book by that title. Gosse employs all the techniques which Siebenschuh defines as pertinent to "literary art"--dialogue, dramatic scenes, and the "affective dimension of language" (7)--and he adds to Siebenschuh's list the features of irony, humour, and Biblical style and imagery. All the ingredients necessary for the sin of story-telling are present in Gosse's biographies.

In "The Custom of Biography", Gosse defined biography's main priority in terms that stressed its visual dimension: the importance of painting a clear picture. Thus the very definition of biography is conceived in metaphorical terms--painting and drawing--and this suggests that visual art can legitimately lend itself to literary endeavour (even though words are not the same as brushstrokes). To make biographical portraits come alive, a particularity of image is required, an ability on the biographer's part to create an atmosphere, to flaunt his descriptive skills. These gifts Gosse possessed in abundance, so much so that they often threaten to overwhelm the content of his biographies.



What Gosse admires in an early biographer, Cavendish, is his aptitude for "personal description" (CB 198) and "vivid . . . portraiture" (197), a talent which the former exploited in his own biographies. The particular story from The Life of Wolsey (1557) which Gosse praises gives us an idea of his own biographical tastes:

The story of the degradation of Wolsey, led up to by that strange omen of the great silver cross falling upon Bonner and cutting his head, and culminating in the mysterious visit of the Earl of Northumberland, up to the fatal moment when that trembling envoy said, 'with a very faint and soft voice, laying his hand on Wolsey's arm, "My lord, I arrest you of high treason"' . . . (CB 198).

Cavendish's story is sensational enough for a romantic thriller--reminiscent of the scrap of romance which Edmund read on a trunk as a boy<sup>21</sup>--and it is this sensationalizing of events which appeals to Gosse<sup>22</sup>. Making a story out of life and investing it with romance is the kind of artistic performance which Gosse admires and attempts to reproduce in his own biographies. In Coventry Patmore, Gosse declares that what is attractive about Patmore's early poetry is its "lyrical setting" (219), and this dedication to lyrical setting is what Gosse brings to his biographical works. One of the central metaphors he uses when describing the imaginative relationship between biographer and biographee is that of vision (complementing his role as a painter of portraits). Yet the vision which allows him to see his artists with clarity is the inner eye of the imagination, like that of poet, lover, or madman in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Alternatively, Gosse could be described as a seer or

prophet--an heir to the paternal "oracle" he describes in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S..

IV.ii. Gosse's Imaginative "Vision" in the Biographies.

Gosse's biographies offer many examples of his visionary capacity. One of the earliest comes from his brief "Memoir of Thomas Lodge" (1882), where he muses as follows:

It is very pleasant to imagine the young poet, in the same picturesque dress in which his fellow-soldiers fought the Spanish Armada, stretched on the deck of his ship while she sailed under a tropical sky, and setting the amorous passions of the Forest of Arden to the monotonous music of the ocean (17-18).

He paints a similarly romantic scene in The Life and Letters of John Donne:

we can imagine him lying there, all alone, propped up in state in his great dark chamber; scribbling these funereal conceits on a tablet that rests against the fold of the coverlet, while "that striking clock which I ordinarily wear" ticks on the table at his side (II 183).

Gosse seems to have reconstructed the foregoing scene from a passage from Donne's sickbed reflections which complains about the "miserable and inhuman posture" he has to assume in bed (II 183). Gosse uses tidbits from Donne's "funereal" reflections--the striking clock, the uncomfortable posture--as a springboard for his own imaginings, and the descriptive scene he paints bears the mark of Gosse and not Donne. In the language of typology, Gosse has struck (or stamped) Donne with the shaping matrix of his pen. Here, the biographer "exploits" raw biographical materials for his own imaginative purposes in

the same way that Shipton exploited Emily's death and forced it to serve her own typological and literary agendas.

The authority for visions about artists such as Lawson and Donne, whom Edmund could not have known personally, is derived from the imagination. Gosse also uses his creative vision (and the authority of friendship) to remember contemporary literary friends--Robert Browning, Coventry Patmore--that he has lost. For instance, Gosse casts his mind back to the time when Browning was alive: "I seem to see him now, about six years ago, standing in the east wind on the doorstep of his house in Warwick Crescent" (78). As demonstrated earlier in the seaside scene from Coventry Patmore, Gosse likes to surround his literary figures with appropriately atmospheric weather conditions. But his interior scenes are equally dramatic. Employing the energies of his "sympathetic imagination", Gosse describes Patmore's typical fire-side manner:

I see him now, stretched in his familiar seated attitude, his hands clasped, his arms extended along his legs, the whole body attenuated and immobile, only the marvellous head moving sharply and frequently, almost as if on a pivot, the eyes darkling and twinkling, the Protean lips reflecting in their curves every shade of feeling that passed over the poet's mind (CP 156)<sup>23</sup>.

Gosse's use of what Siebenschuh calls "dramatized episodes" (7) can sometimes verge on the ridiculous<sup>24</sup>, and his scenes with the poets often read like romance novels or even romantic gospels. Take, for example, a scene from the "Personal Impressions" section of Robert Browning: Personalia, where Gosse describes the last talk he enjoyed with Browning in the garden at Trinity College, Cambridge:

The blue sky was cloudless above, summer foliage hemmed us round in a green mist, a pink mountain of a double-may in blossom rose in front. We were close to a hot shrub of sweetbriar that exhaled its balm in the sunshine. Commonly given to much gesticulation, the poet sat quite still on this occasion; and, the perfect quiet being only broken by his voice, the birds lost fear and came closer and closer, curiously peeping (83-84).

Browning here seems to share the qualities of Eve, Christ, St. Francis, and all-purpose patron of nature and fertility<sup>25</sup>. Gosse himself is a reverent yet flirtatious disciple, recording in worshipful tones his experience of the master in the collegiate version of the Garden of Gethsemane.

Gosse's "fictional techniques" of dramatic setting and lyrical description are consistently maintained from biography to biography<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, certain symbolic patterns recur throughout his biographical corpus. One of the prime images Gosse employs to describe the qualities of poets and artists is that of light, again reinforcing the visual bias of Gosse's conception of the art of biography. For instance, light imagery is used to describe the atmospheric effects of one of Lawson's paintings:

A screen of heavy green foliage in front seemed drawn . . . to disclose this glowing dream of summer. The warm light that suffused the sky interpenetrated the floating haze like gold threads in a tissue. The sentiment of afternoon was never more poetically rendered (CL 16).

Descriptions like these add weight to Benson's criticism of Gosse, in that the reader comes away from it with the "floating haze" of Gosse's sentiments instead of Lawson's.

The metaphor of light is used exalt Donne's poetic luminosity, which Gosse attributes to his distinguished inheritance:

One can imagine nothing more stimulating to the imagination . . . than to walk in the light which "Beat bright on the burning faces" of the martyrs, poets, scholars, and enthusiasts of his race down four generations (Donne I 5).

The light is described in Biblical terms--walking in the light, the blessed fourth generation--and reminds the reader of the Fourth Gospel: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehend it not" (1:5)<sup>27</sup>. The symbolism of light serves to clothe poetic inspiration in religious terms, promoting the Romantic notion of the poet as prophet<sup>28</sup>.

A sustained image that appears in the pages of Father and Son--the poet as magician--is also present in Gosse's corpus of biographies, and it complements the idea of the poet as prophet. Variations on the magician theme include: conjurer, enchanter, hypnotism, and bewitchment<sup>29</sup>. The magical poet, like Prospero, creates worlds with his words<sup>30</sup>. He also resembles the God of Genesis and creator of the Word in the Fourth Gospel.

V. Tropological Identification with the Subjects of  
Biographies: Gosse's Preference for Artists Who "Shape" and  
Select.

For the most part, the artists that Gosse chooses to commemorate share (and possibly help create) his attitudes towards art and the imagination; their aesthetic philosophy matches his. Gosse is fascinated by what influenced their development as poets and artists, and he frequently seems to be trying to divine the secrets of their creativity. The authority which possession of these poetic secrets confers on Gosse is what facilitates his tropological "readings" of the poets' lives.

Edmund claims poetic kinship with the subjects of his biographies by merit of his intimacy and close identification with them. Kinship is implied in the biographical relationship itself, making the biographer into a species of disciple or honorary son. In this sense, Gosse's status as biographer may be compared to that of John Donne, the younger, who was appointed literary executor for his father and whom Gosse decides, finally, is "a sad liar" (Donne II 325). Gosse, too, is a sad liar in the sense that he tries to create a sham literary inheritance for himself through writing the lives of those whom he perceives to be his poetic fathers. For instance, a 1917 letter documented in Transatlantic Dialogue (1965) from Gosse to the American critic Lewis Chase outlines Gosse's early poetic influences, which include Gray and Swinburne (297), both of whom became the subjects of biographical enterprise. If Gosse's

biographies are read as autobiographies, then we can see him trying to internalize, appropriate, or at the very least associate his name with other men's artistic achievements. The two names on the book cover start to get confused: Gray/Gosse, Coventry Patmore/Gosse, Jeremy Taylor/Gosse.

Gosse is attracted to men of imagination over men of realistic imitation (with the notable exception of Donne and Patmore, who nevertheless are imaginative even though their style is naturalistic)<sup>31</sup>. As far as Gosse is concerned, the more sins of the imagination the better. In his "Memoir of Thomas Lodge", Edmund eulogizes the light of creativity which suffuses Lodge's forest of Arden, a light "which never shone on sea or land, but which has coloured the romantic vision of dreamers since the world began" (20). A product of pure fancy, Arden is created in a realm outside of space, time, and matter.

In addition to Lodge, another dreamer whom Gosse praised was Jeremy Taylor, describing "the ecstatic dream, the coloured reverie of Taylor" (11). Sir Thomas Browne also falls into the category of visionary dreamer: "He was, above all, and at all times, a dreamer of dreams" (TB 187). Gosse's conception of the poet is exalted and romantic--he is a dreamer, a character who lives in a different world, separate from the prosaic details of ordinary life. The sensitive poet's otherworldliness resembles the aristocratic "monasticism" of the Plymouth Brethren. And the poet's visionary capacity resembles that of the Gossian biographer.

Gosse grants to the painter Cecil Lawson the same prophetic privileges as a romantic poet, in that Lawson

forced "from the visible earth and sky a message which had been given to none but him" (CL 2). His temper was "literary or antiquarian" and he had "a passion for style". He was always "dreaming, adapting, composing". In short, Lawson was a "poet in landscape" and "another master of harmonies" (CL 6). Here, Lawson is portrayed as the supreme artist, someone who did not have a strictly mimetic conception of the relationship between art and nature. Instead, "he painted . . . with an effort to outdo nature" (32), something which would have earned Wilde's approval, not to mention Gosse's. Moreover, Lawson is an active maker, shaper, composer--asserting the independence and authority of the artist over his raw materials. He resembles the typological practitioner in his or her determination to stamp Biblical images on pliable forms.

The lesson to be learned from Lawson is that "the sense of beauty was in the artist, not in the scenes he painted, and that with him the painting of landscape was not photographic reproduction, but poetical creation" (CL 36)<sup>32</sup>. The "true" artist, like Lawson, reserves the right to interpret reality according to the dictates of his imagination. Lawson is the embodiment of Wilde's notion that the greatest art bears the stamp of the artist and not the character of the materials with which he works.

Jeremy Taylor resembled Lawson and Browne in his commitment to "beauty", in his case the beauty of prose. Gosse describes how Taylor's

preoccupation with beauty, not in any secondary or suggested form, but in the most gorgeous scarlet and gold of fancy, and accompanied by flutes and hautboys



of calculated cadence, distinguishes him at once from all his fellows (JT 218).

Moreover, Taylor shares with Browne "this richness of imaginative ornament" (JT 218). Art here is artificial, calculated, ornamental, an end in itself. In Wildean terms, art is decadent and exists for its own sake--otherwise it would be merely "secondary".

Poetic philosophy after Wilde and Gosse legislates for freedom of interpretation and the abrogation of ultimate authority to the artist, a philosophy which can promote an irreverent attitude towards the sacred provinces of theology and the classics. For example, Taylor's use of classical types was cavalier, as he forced classical allusions "to illustrate him, generally very much indeed against their will, with haughty disregard of their intention" (JT 223). Yet typology itself encourages this very attitude, in its "haughty disregard" of the original intention of the Hebrew Scriptures. Writers like Taylor, Shipton, and Gosse all adopt Biblical typology's tendency to go "against the will" of the original texts or persons under interpretation.

Gosse seems to admire Taylor's indifference to tradition. Yet Taylor's attitude to religious ritual is not "indifferent to forms" (in complete contrast to Edmund's parents in Father and Son 53), but instead he is committed to the artistic expression of religious form: "he did not believe in impromptu devotion, or worship conducted without art or deliberation" (JT 39). If art is allowed to manipulate liturgy, then it is further allowed to manipulate the rite of death itself, as we have seen in Donne's

deathbed performance. The fact that Donne staged his own death in terms of the theatrical can be attributed to the poetic world-view of the seventeenth century, which enjoyed a "fantastic and poetic conception of existence" (II 286). Gosse adopts this conception in his attitude to biography. Life is poetic and capable of being transformed into poetry, and what is more, the reverse is true, after Wilde: art transforms life and makes it obey aesthetic rules. For instance, Coventry Patmore exemplifies the trendsetting power of the artist when he "did not scruple to invent Catholic legends, some of which are now . . . in steady circulation among the devout" (CP 210)<sup>33</sup>.

The shaping selectivity of art and typology is what Gosse brings to his biographies. Moreover, the fictional techniques that Gosse employs in his biographical corpus serve to highlight rather than disguise the fact that he paints his poets and artists in his own way, on his own terms (just as Shipton painted Emily on her own terms). Reliance on artistic techniques to paint personal portraits could be seen as undermining the genre of biography's general claims to truthfulness. Siebenschuh has articulated the problem in this way: "There are no easily applicable guidelines to suggest where, in a given work, we should draw the line between purely aesthetic effect and historical or biographical interpretation and comment" (3).

Can a biographer be an artist or are the two mutually exclusive? Gosse explores the difficulty in reference to Taylor's conflict between "aesthetic effect" and theology. The reason why Taylor has not been regarded as an artist is

because his particular professional province has been considered inimical to poetry. Gosse explains:

the fame of Jeremy Taylor has been injured among general readers by the fact that he is a divine, and among divines by the fact that he is an artist. . . . like other professional and scientific authors, much of what he says . . . is definite statement into which the element of style cannot enter. The theologian, moreover, is obliged to use a great number of formulas and instances which are not his own, and with the form of which he dare not tamper. He is bound to have those words of Scripture, which never can be his own words, for ever on his lips (JT 212).

Gosse believes Taylor was unfairly stigmatized as an artist. Yet his defence of Taylor is ironic, in that in Father and Son he was the first person to declare that his own parents could not be artists because they were theologians and typologists (although his 1890 biography of Philip Gosse mitigates this view, with its presentation of the "poetic" father). Edmund resented the fact that his parents forced him to mimic Biblical words and patterns--primarily the Samuel narrative--that were "not his own", thus undermining his ability to become an original poet. They "bound" and yoked the words of the Bible to his lips.

Gosse suggests that theology's form is not subject to the authority of the artist, and that beautiful style conflicts with "definite" statement (although in other places he contradicts this)<sup>34</sup>. But does the same injunction against style and fiction apply to biography? I would argue that in Gosse's case it does not, in that he has defined his aims in metaphorical terms--painting a picture--and that the fictional and autobiographical elements in his biographies go far toward sharpening the focus of the portrait (even if

it is distorted in the process). Ironically, Gosse's "literary" biographies offer a parallel to the religious and typological "artistry" of his parents, despite the fact that Father and Son refuses to acknowledge the potential for creativity inherent in the Puritan tradition.

Just as Gosse asserted his "literary" independence from theological and typological forms when he threw off his "yoke", so he reserves the right to create "aesthetic effects" within a nominally factual realm of writing. In both cases, he wreaks revenge on systems of typology by using typology's own methods; he exposes the fictional elements in theology and biography by exaggerating them into visibility, almost daring the reader to pay attention to them<sup>35</sup>. And if biography and theology are open to being read in fictional terms, might not the very notion of self be vulnerable to a fictional interpretation?

#### VI.i. Romantic and Puritan Rebels in the Biographies.

Gosse's conception of the artist (or biographer) as a person who is beyond the laws of theology or tradition can be detected in some of his biographical portraits<sup>36</sup>. Gosse prefers strong individualists and "artistic" authority figures like his father, men who stand alone, raised above the crowd. The isolated genius, the solitary rebel--these are the biographical images Gosse likes to project, especially concerning Lawson, Philip Gosse, Donne, Patmore, Ibsen, and occasionally Gray. Like Mark Rutherford, Gray gives "the full tone of the romantic solitary" (189) and he

is "a pathetic type of the solitude of the soul" (210)<sup>37</sup>. Both share an association with Wordsworth, one of the founders of romantic solitude--Gray as a literary forerunner to Wordsworth, Rutherford as a Wordsworthian convert.

Donne and Patmore are the solitary patriarchs and founders of particular poetic traditions. For instance, Gosse perceives Donne's influence on Pope, whose style "may be traced backward to Donne, and no further. From him the descent of it is unbroken" (Donne II 352). And Patmore is "like the Phoenix of fable, the solitary specimen of an unrelated species" (CP 212). Donne and Patmore, the two poets who most resemble Philip Gosse, are like Adam with his prochronic navel, thus synthesizing evolution with the Genesis inheritance model in a way hauntingly similar to the thesis of Omphalos.

The aesthetic ideals of many of Gosse's artists are iconoclastic and defiant of convention. Donne, for example, "from the very first . . . was independent. His isolation from the accepted models of style . . . is apparent from the opening of his poetical career" (Donne I 36). Donne in his youth was a "magnificent rebel" (I 63), like the prodigal son or Blake's Satan. He resembles other rebellious figures that Gosse admired, like Stevenson, Swinburne and the members of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood<sup>38</sup>.

Philip Henry Gosse could also qualify as a rebel, especially in his last hours<sup>39</sup>. Throughout his life, he maintained an independence of thought and spirit that to a great degree resembles Edmund's depictions of the characters of Donne and Patmore. In Donne's eyes, the poets of his own

era were "a meat offered to idols. He carried his fierce nonconformity in his heart, and he would not sit at table with the heathen Spenserian and Petrarchist" (Donne II 331). This passage contains many echoes of Philip Gosse, who died eleven years before the Donne biography was published: in the idolatrous Christmas pudding described in Father and Son (111)<sup>40</sup>, the elder Gosse's "fierce nonconformity", and refusal to eat with a Unitarian<sup>41</sup>. Yet Donne's essentially poetic nonconformity is described as though it were a religious one (in contrast with his acceptance and promotion of the Anglican party-line after growing up in the Catholic faith of his ancestors). This provides another example of Edmund Gosse's capacity to turn theology into literature, appropriating the divine and placing it in the hands of poets.

Donne is also a literary Puritan in his attitude to the classical tradition: "He banished the gods and goddesses from his verse, not a Roundhead fiercer than he in his scorn of "those old idols"" (Donne II 337). The Life and Letters of John Donne foreshadows the conflict between Paganism and Christianity in Father and Son, where Susan Flood literally smashes idols and Philip Henry denounces the Greek Gods: "he said that the so-called gods of the Greeks were the shadows cast by the vices of the heathen" (204). Yet Edmund takes the gods' side and cries over "indignities done to Hermes and to Aphrodite" (207).

Edmund Gosse does not confine his Puritan researches to the seventeenth century. Coventry Patmore was slightly younger than Philip Gosse, and he resembles the latter in

his nonconformity (though Catholic) and "absolute liberty in matters of will" (CP 181). Edmund sums up the poet's character in a phrase which could apply with equal justice to his father: Patmore is "a militant hermit of the soul" (CP 178). Edmund further declares that "to no other man of his age was the general trend of the nineteenth century towards uniformity and solidarity so detestable" (CP 177)<sup>42</sup>. In poetic matters, Patmore asserted his singularity and independence by studiously avoiding the influence of Tennyson and Browning: "on his poetry of this period [late 1840s and 50s] there is scarcely any trace of contemporary influence" (51)<sup>43</sup>. The choice of Patmore as a subject for biography is justified by his uniqueness, individuality, and originality--an extraordinary life is sacred enough to commit to writing.

Patmore's literary self-sufficiency and unconventionality can be attributed in part to the influence of typology and the independence of spirit that individual Bible study can inspire. Gosse ascribes Patmore's "lofty, moral arrogance" (CP 211) to the self-confidence which comes from having insight into the will of God: "If you firmly believe that your volition is melted into God's, there is no difficulty in supposing that if you find yourself wishing for something or approving something, that thing is also approved by God" (184). God's will becomes confused with your will, and pretty soon His will becomes irrelevant. This is an attitude which the tropological world-view fosters. Philip and Emily Gosse were similarly convinced of their own private communion with the mind of God: "So confident were

they of the reality of their intercourse with God, that they asked for no other guide. They recognized no spiritual authority among men" (F&S 43-44). The Gosse household, a kind of typologically-sponsored hermitage, was composed of self-styled Biblical characters.

#### VI.ii. Gosse's Poets as Antitypes of Prophets.

Typology meets romanticism in Gosse's biographies and creates prophets out of poets and Christ-figures out of artists. The version of Christ that often surfaces in the biographies resembles that which William Hale White constructs in Mark Rutherford's autobiographies; He is solitary, individualistic, and often melancholy. The poets Gosse memorializes number among the elect, and some of them are given a mystical poetic destiny, as if the God of Poetry parcelled out predestined gifts at the beginning of time. Prefiguring the apotheosis of poetry that occurs in Father and Son, Gosse's poetic biographies often borrow Biblical images and phraseology to better exalt the artists he worships<sup>44</sup>. This reification of the creative artist is also extended to the artist's creations. For example, Gosse describes Ibsen's Brand in typological terms, comparing him to John the Baptist: "He exists in his personage, under the precipice, above the fjord, like a rude mediaeval anchorite, who eats his locusts and wild honey in the desert" (Ibsen 106). And Ibsen's revolutionary work is that of "a blind Samson" (256).



Providing further evidence of the persistence of his Biblical training, Gosse extols the poetic independence of John Donne in Pauline style, describing Donne's relationship to Spenser and Shakespeare:

Would not these examples of the aesthetic fervour of the age tempt the new poet to imitation, at least until the wings of his personal style were fully fledged? By no means; from the very first Donne was a rebel against the poetic canons and tendencies of the age (Donne I 29).

Gosse portrays Donne as a kind of Jesus of the poets, "trying the spirits whether they be of God" (I 38-39). And in Donne's later sermons:

we must conceive him as more a voice than a man, almost a disembodied inspiration calling the world up heavenwards from a height which already seemed above a mortal pitch, the human preacher dissolved into "a portion of the Eternal," as Shelley says, become "a splendour in the firmament of time" (II 197).

Like Browning<sup>45</sup>, Donne is given cosmological status, as he "[blazes] from the pulpit like a star" (Donne II 197). Like the Philip Gosse of Edmund's childhood, Donne resembles a god who is "supreme and unapproachable" (II 236). Other adjectives that divinize or typologize him include: saint, Ezekiel, St. Stephen, Elect (II 276-77), heretic, prophet, divine, Jacob, and Job. Furthermore, the entire Donne biography can be read as profoundly Biblical and typological in nature, and as a species of poetic chief-of-sinner-turned-saint's life that resembles Augustine's Confessions and Bunyan's Grace Abounding.

In Gosse's work, religious destiny enters into the biographical equation and sanctifies a variety of political, religious, and artistic dedications. In "The Character of

Queen Victoria" (1901), Gosse comments on the queen's sense of divine calling and political destiny: "in her own heart she never questioned that she was the anointed of the Lord, called by the most solemn warrant to rule a great nation in the fear of God" (337). Thus, the queen is placed into a typological relationship with David, just as Edmund was forced into another "solemn" contract with the Lord to be Samuel at his mother's deathbed.

Like Donne, whose conversion from Catholicism to Anglicanism is clothed in poetic and deterministic language (II 3), Patmore also experienced a marriage of religious and poetic dedication when, in later life, he dedicated his muse to the Virgin (CP 146-147). Patmore here fulfils the role of poet as prophet in a more traditional sense, and he, in tandem with Donne, is perceived to be an Ezekiel (CP 201, 207). Patmore's poetic "ecstasy" sometimes made him "almost like a man consciously breathed into by a god" (215). And his prophetic ambitions are stated openly: "the poet alone has the power of so saying the truths which it is not expedient to utter" (CP 244). Here, poetry is "the handmaiden of God" (CP 249)<sup>66</sup>. Finally, Gosse describes Browne in similarly prophetic terms, for Browne "speaks like a sybylline oracle" (177), an image that was also used to describe his father (Life of PHG 207). Gosse broadens the Biblical definition of prophet to include the poetic vocation.

## VII. Puritans as the Enemies of Literature.

Gosse's biographies of seventeenth-century writers such as Browne, Donne, and Taylor provide him with an opportunity to contrast Puritan religion with aesthetic "religion", his sympathies for the most part falling with the latter. The puritans that appear in Gosse's books are usually portrayed as the enemies of literature; they are forerunners to people like Emily Gosse's Calvinist governess who denounce storytelling as a sin. Edmund Gosse seems to distance and externalize a personal psychological struggle between theology and literature when he chooses to write about seventeenth-century social conflicts. In doing so, he possibly mirrors the movement from autobiography to allegory that Bunyan made when he re-told Grace Abounding in the form of The Pilgrim's Progress. In Gosse's case, the movement was from biographical allegory to autobiographical typology in Father and Son.

Gosse's own aesthetic sensibilities can be read as a version of Restoration reaction after the ascetic excesses of Puritanism. The Puritans under Cromwell banned poetry, painting, secular music, and the theatre--damning them as deadly sins. But, as Gosse's Life of William Congreve records, when King Charles was restored to the throne, his subjects mixed "patriotism and debauchery, gaming, drinking, and the Church of England" (86). In a similar manner, Gosse established himself within the decadent Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood after he left the shelter of his Puritan upbringing behind in Devon. The forbidden sins of

aestheticism became all the more attractive, contributing to his own personal restoration to worldly pleasures. Gosse's biographies play out the civil war in emotional terms, raising the author's personal crisis to an epic level.

In Jeremy Taylor, Gosse somewhat facetiously blames the long length of seventeenth-century popular books on the Puritans:

Puritan asceticism had sealed up the sources of genial enjoyment. In the country all festivities and sports had been abolished; in the town, with edicts of vindictive ferocity, all play-house and places of amusement had been closed. The only entertainment left was literature, and people could not have it too elaborately prolonged (62).

Puritans are vindictive and ferocious, the avowed enemies of fun. They are the ancestors of puritans like Philip Gosse who violently attack Christmas puddings (F&S 112) and refuse to read Shakespeare (F&S 177).

Despite a measure of "decadent" Restoration reaction, the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were not immune to the Puritan attitude to literature. In Life of Congreve, Gosse describes some of the blows the Restoration stage received at the hands of moral reformers like Collier. Gosse uses Puritan attitudes as a standard of anti-aesthetic zeal against which to measure Collier's attacks, and the latter comes out a little better than the Dissenters, as the "cushion-thumping, the rage of the frowsy Puritan preacher" (LWC 94) was not his style. To his credit, Collier "was not violent with the headless rage of a Puritan" (LWC 91), unlike characters like Susan Flood (F&S 205). Gosse characterizes the average Puritan's response to literature at the time of Congreve:

He was dimly conscious of evil deeds made glorious, of evil words sanctified to the service of the Muses. . . . he broke the idols and stamped upon the relics of the poets, nor did he select with care what images he would wreak his vengeance upon. If he had possessed more artistic feeling, it would probably have balked his zeal (LWC 115).

Edmund concedes that the Restoration stage deserved many of the reproofs that "the blast of indignant Puritanism" (115) gave it, but nevertheless he emphasizes the unreasonable philistinism of the Puritan. Puritanism represents the vanguard of the prosaic, with the poets suffering under the twin forces of bad taste and violent zeal. One of the Dissenter's representatives is a certain Ross, a Scottish Puritan whom Gosse criticizes for being too literal and prosaic in his reading of Browne's Religio Medici; he is indicted for failing to see its "visionary" and "beautiful" qualities (64). According to Gosse, Ross's imaginative failure epitomizes the Puritan spirit and serves to illustrate the fact that Puritanism is completely incompatible with Art<sup>47</sup>. A further anti-Puritan protest on Gosse's part occurs when he expostulates against the unfair classification of Ibsen as a dour moralist: "He is a poet, of fantastic wit and often reckless imagination, and he has been travestied in a long black coat and white choker, as though he were an embodiment of the Nonconformist conscience" (Ibsen 114).

In Gosse's book, Puritanism's primary sin is its dearth of artistic feeling. Gosse praises Donne, an Anglican, for his delicate touch in the pulpit: "His elegant intensity was recollected in the next generation as the type of good pulpit taste, and as the thing most diametrically opposed to

the cushion-thumping of the Sons of Zeal" (Donne II 289). One suspects that Edmund assigned his father to the category of cushion-thumper, thus tainting him with all the unfashionable connotations that dissent carries<sup>10</sup>.

Making further accusations against Puritanism for the crime of squelching creativity, Gosse declares in Life of William Congreve that the century which saw Donne's triumph of homiletic poise closed "in depression of the literary class, and in scathing Puritanical criticism of the poets" (117). According to Gosse's "Memoir of Thomas Lodge", the sixteenth-century also failed to roust the enemies of poetry, as seen by the way in which a certain Rev. Stephen Gosson railed against Thomas Lodge in a book aptly titled The School of Abuse (1579). Gosson's publication was "a furious counterblast against poetry, music, and the drama . . . a puritanical attempt to nip in the bud the whole new blossom of English literature" (6).

The war between Puritans and Royalists was a literary war as well, with the opposing camps holding different beliefs about the true purpose of language. For example, Puritans were suspicious of Jeremy Taylor (an early disciple of Laud) because he was too literary a theologian. Gosse writes in Taylor's biography:

From the very first he was not a favourite with persons of a strenuous or Puritanical bent of mind, and could not be; because his pre-occupation with beauty was bound to be viewed with disfavour amongst those who felt that the humblest and baldest types of speech were sufficient to express exhortation, supplication, and contrition (213).

Gosse's own pre-occupation with beauty would eventually interfere with the course of his typologically-determined

destiny. Despite the "artistry" of his father's faith, with its theatrical prayers and Bible-readings<sup>49</sup>, Gosse rejected it as unlikely to promote "sympathetic imagination". Despite the fact that his father introduced him to the beauties of Hebrew literature, Gosse discarded Philip's "Biblical" aestheticism in favor of an interpretation of language which emphasized its ornamental over its theological or didactic value. Not for Edmund the "humblest and baldest types of speech". In an attempt to define himself away from Philip, Edmund chose the language of poetry and fiction, rejecting Puritan strictures against the sin of storytelling while at the same time appropriating typological and biographical stories for his own literary purposes.

Yet the irony is that the tradition in which Edmund was raised contained all the features necessary for the sin of storytelling. The Bible was sufficient literary inspiration for Philip Gosse and a dramatist like Ibsen, arguably two greater artists than their mutual biographer:

Ibsen's reading was singularly limited. . . I remember being struck by seeing no books at all, except the large Bible which always lay at his side, and formed his constant study. He disliked having his partiality for the Bible commented on, and if . . . religious people expressed pleasure at finding him deep in the sacred volume, Ibsen would roughly reply: "It is only for the sake of the language" (Ibsen 241).

Here, it is not the Bible's fault that Edmund did not become a great poet; it is Edmund himself who failed to "read" the Bible as creatively as Ibsen, and, to a lesser degree, his father. Typology inspired Edmund's attitudes towards art--particularly his propensity to wield authority over his

materials and define poets on his own terms--and his parents' readings of the Bible served to encourage, rather than inhibit, the sin of storytelling. Yet Philip and Emily ultimately emerge as more authentic typological "sinners" than their son, who was doomed to play the role of servant to the Great Poets.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Churton Collins attacked Gosse's From Shakespeare to Pope (1885) in The Quarterly Review of October 1886. He lambasts Gosse as a literary charlatan whose position as the Clark Lecturer at Cambridge is undeserved. Collins believed that From Shakespeare to Pope, with its innumerable inaccuracies, was unworthy of the University of Cambridge: "That such a book as this should have been permitted to go forth to the world with the imprimatur of the University of Cambridge, affords matter for very grave reflection" (289).

<sup>2</sup> Significantly, the section on biography came under the rubric of English literature instead of History or some more "objective" category. This supports Gosse's "artistic" conception of the biographer's role.

<sup>3</sup> For another example of Gosse's opening statement of purpose, see "Memoir of Thomas Lodge" (1882): "If a full and continuous biography of Thomas Lodge could be recovered. . . . It would combine, in a series of pictures, scenes from all the principle conditions of life in that stirring and vigorous age" (1). The phrase "series of pictures" complements the notion of portrait-painting.

<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, this conflation between the artist and his work varies to a certain extent from biography to biography.

<sup>5</sup> Donne committed acts of typological confusion and blasphemy when he seemed to conflate Elizabeth Drury with the Virgin Mary in a poem (Donne I 277), thus providing another example of typology making itself redundant.

<sup>6</sup> Yet this is nothing new to the Gosse family. Emily's "Recollections" open with an appeal to the Holy Spirit to enlighten her understanding (11). Her short autobiography also resembles a sermon.

<sup>7</sup> This process is exemplified in the way in which Shipton disapproved of Emily's "Recollections". She didn't like the idea of the latter defining herself on her own terms.

<sup>8</sup> Gosse produced beautiful biographies of his own. His Cecil Lawson: A Memoir is the size of a Medieval Bible (though less than half as thick) and it is decorated with calligraphy. The Anglo-Saxon Review, to which Gosse contributed "The Custom of Biography", also has a very decorative cover.

<sup>9</sup> Thwaite's biography provides some other examples of Gosse's sympathetic approach. After reading Gosse's Gray, Thomas Woolner said to the author: "'None but a poet could have written of a poet with such sympathy,'" (Thwaite 234). And Gosse completely threw himself into the composition of Jeremy Taylor: "In February 1903, Gosse wrote to Lady Dorothy Nevill: 'I have been absolutely absorbed in work,

going nowhere and seeing nothing. I live all day in the company of Jeremy Taylor and dream of him at night" (Thwaite 414). Moreover, The Correspondence of André Gide and Edmund Gosse 1904-1928 (1959) contains a letter dated March 7, 1910 in which Gosse confesses to Gide that he "put the whole passion of [his] mind" into Father and Son (54).

<sup>10</sup> As amateurs go, the worst enemy to biography is the Widow, whom Gosse somewhat cattily labels "the triumph of the unfittest" (CB 205). Her crime is to lie in an inartistic way--not through beautiful style but through "sanctimonious" whitewash. She gives a false, saintly impression of her husband: "Her function . . . always is to stultify and misrepresent the life and character of the deceased" (CB 206). Edmund's step-mother wrote a short memoir of her husband which misrepresents him to a certain extent (but no more so than Edmund himself). An even saintlier biography is Anna Shipton's memoir of Emily Gosse. And a seventeenth-century whitewasher is Izaak Walton, who preserved Donne in a "dignified gloom" (Donne I viii). Widows and disciples are prone to hagiography, but sensible biographers should be committed to a certain objectivity and honesty.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Gosse also hated "that species of modern biography which depicts what was a human being as though transformed into the tinted wax of a hairdresser's block. He used to speak with strong contempt of 'goody-goody lives of good men.'" (Life of PHG viii).

<sup>12</sup> Robert Browning was "a boy consciously, and of set purpose, trained to be a poet" (RBP 19), yet, even more miraculously, "When the son had arrived at that age at which the bias or opportunity of parents usually dictates a profession to a youth, Mr. Browning asked his son what he intended to be" (25). (However, the first statement seems to contradict the second). Coventry Patmore was similarly fortunate. His father was "a sympathetic, proud, and ambitious parent, and an encourager of Coventry's genius" (4).

<sup>13</sup> In his biography, Thomas Hardy, Michael Millgate defines Gosse's attitude to friendship: "Gosse's deliberate cultivation of his great, his aristocratic, and even his potentially useful contemporaries has often been commented upon . . . . The devotion with which he pursued his game often became indistinguishable from friendship itself, and, in the end, not notably more self-serving than many of the relationships dignified by that name" (Millgate 231-232). Like Mason, Gosse was a gifted flatterer, yet he also "had charm, humour, a ready tongue, and a facile and indefatigable pen" (231).

<sup>14</sup> The Life and Letters of John Donne (I v, xi).

<sup>15</sup> Robert Browning: Personalalia (3).

<sup>16</sup> Compare Shipton's disclaimer in Tell Jesus! that she did not want to write about herself (1).

<sup>17</sup> Gosse's thoughts and opinions "naturally" intrude into his biographical narratives, but sometimes they are more obtrusive than others. Take a sample from Gray where he describes his reaction to Hammond's poetry: "after reading, with much fatigue, his forgotten elegies, I cannot avoid the impression that Gray was influenced by this poetaster" (99). Gosse's presence is a little more subdued in his biography of Donne (something which can be attributed to the fall-out from the Churton Collins affair), but nevertheless it surfaces in scenes like these: "'O well for him whose will is strong,' we murmur in front of this portrait" (I 23). The careful, scholarly passages in The Life and Letters of John Donne are the least interesting parts of the book because there is less opportunity for Gosse to show off his fiction-writing skills (skills which are reminiscent of Philip's flair for "poetic" natural history). In an essay on Mandell Creighton in Portraits and Sketches (1912), Gosse indirectly confesses to the "literary" temptations a biographer faces when he describes Creighton's style of writing history and biography: "Creighton was determined not to stoop to the blandishments of anecdote or the siren lure of style" (178).

<sup>18</sup> When Edmund's recollections break into The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, he remembers a remarkably similar scene. Philip is an Apollo, sprayed by sea foam (258). The two "father memories" are conflated.

<sup>19</sup> Gosse grew to be more of an establishment figure in his later years, and often his ambivalent attitude to dissent shines through in his biographies. His ambivalence could be compared to that which his mother expressed in her "Recollections".

<sup>20</sup> Churton Collins complained about this tendency in his 1886 Quarterly Review article, taking a passage from From Shakespeare to Pope to illustrate his point: "the following is so exquisitely characteristic, not only of Mr. Gosse himself but of the Dilettanti School generally, that we cannot pass it by. 'Late in the summer, one handsome and gallant young fellow [Sidney Godolphin] . . . riding down the deep-leaved lanes that led from Dartmoor . . . , met a party of Roundheads, was cut down and killed' . . . . Now Sidney Godolphin was killed at the end of January 1642-3, when the lanes were, we apprehend, not deep-leaved; he was, it may be added, not handsome, for Clarendon especially enlarges on the meanness of his person; he was not 'cut down and killed,' he was shot dead by a musket ball . . . ." (300).

<sup>21</sup> Father and Son (59).

<sup>22</sup> Although he is not contemporary with Gosse, Truman Capote also drew upon the sensational elements of real life in his factual novel In Cold Blood (1965).

<sup>23</sup> For other examples of Gosse's biographical visions, see Gray, where he imagines him "reclining in the blue parlour . . . with Horace Walpole" (110) and Sir Thomas Browne, where he sees Browne overseeing a frustrating excavation (175). It's as if Gosse is playing with a doll's house--the way he seems to enjoy placing his characters in different rooms--study, bedroom, blue parlour--and outdoor scenes--beach, wet field. Gosse's frequent "visions" about his biographees give the impression that he would rather be writing fiction, but has instead chosen biography as a "safe" medium to try out his skills. It is safe because it is not criticized according to the same criteria as a novel or poetry. Here is where biography's low status comes in handy; there is not much "artistic" risk involved.

<sup>24</sup> For example, in chapter four, we saw how Edmund went over the top with his man-of-war description (Life of PHG 119).

<sup>25</sup> Browning resembles Philip Gosse in the Alabama forest scene (Life of PHG 124). Robert Browning: Personalia and Philip's biography were both published in 1890.

<sup>26</sup> Gosse's use of suspense is another fictional technique employed for the purposes of biography. See Robert Browning: Personalia (38-39) for a scene involving Browning's slightly mysterious fellow coach-passengers.

<sup>27</sup> In Father and Son the phrase "walking in the light" is also used (37), and alludes to Revelation 21:24.

<sup>28</sup> Light metaphors also can be found in Gray. For example, Gosse refers to Gray's "excess of light" (220) that was later overshadowed by Wordsworth and Byron. Moreover, in Sir Thomas Browne, Gosse describes the "golden haziness" (46) of Browne's Religio Medici. Yet another example of light imagery can be found in Gosse's Life of Congreve (1888) when the author sums up Congreve's literary achievement: "There is a sunshine that filters through the dewy hawthorn-branches, there is a wax-light that flashes back from the sconces of an alcove, but these are not compatible, and the latter is not justly to be extinguished by the former" (174).

<sup>29</sup> See The Life and Letters of John Donne (I 49, 57) and (II 236); Coventry Patmore (154-55); and Sir Thomas Browne (64).

<sup>30</sup> Gosse's interest in The Tempest is described in Father and Son, where he compares himself to Caliban (220). Ibsen, whose biography was published in the same year as Father and Son, is also identified with Caliban: "He was . . . discovered like Caliban, and tamed, and made vocal, by the strenuous arts of friendship" (Ibsen 23-24).

<sup>31</sup> Both Donne and Patmore keep their "eye on the object", just as Edmund kept his nose close to the pan of sea creatures in Father and Son (126). See The Life and

Letters of John Donne (I 49) and Coventry Patmore (222). Their realism could be a comment on Philip's scientific style. (Of Edmund's biographical subjects, Patmore and Donne resemble Philip Gosse the most).

<sup>32</sup> Carr, a contemporary art critic, confirms all Gosse has said about Lawson: "Lawson's sense of composition did not limit itself only to the realities of form" (38).

<sup>33</sup> Patmore demonstrates his ability to create art out of theology in "The Angel in the House". He did not express theology in the poem so much as aesthetics: it was "a purely aesthetic observation . . . conceived in the intoxicating light of imagination" (CP 100).

<sup>34</sup> The typological system itself contradicts this statement, in that it fosters a propensity to play around with theological forms.

<sup>35</sup> This is parallel to the way in which Philip Gosse exposed God's "lies" in the rocks in Omphalos. As Charles Kingsley wrote in a letter to Philip: "in the one single case of your newly created scars on the pandanus trunk, and your newly created Adam's navel, you make God tell a lie. . . I cannot give up the painful and slow conclusion of five and twenty years' study of geology, and believe that God has written on the rocks one enormous and superfluous lie for all mankind" (Life of PHG 281).

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps notions of election and antinomianism are implied here. Gosse's own liberties with other men's biographies could be an unconscious remnant of his childhood position as one of the elect--he could do what he liked because he was saved. Moreover, he read his liberation from Plymouth Brethren theology and typology as a form of "Christian" emancipation from "bondage to the Law and the Prophets" (F&S 171).

<sup>37</sup> Gosse's sympathy with Gray may have undermined his accuracy. Gray was considered to be radically flawed: "every sentence in it was incorrect or inadequate or misleading" (Thwaite 235).

<sup>38</sup> To a certain extent, Gosse saw himself as a rebel, although he grew more conservative as he aged. A letter dated 16 May 1917 to Lewis Chase in Transatlantic Dialogue records Gosse's early attraction to anti-establishment figures like Walt Whitman and D.G. Rossetti (297).

<sup>39</sup> See Thwaite's Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape (316). Here, Philip Gosse can be perceived as a typological rebel, associating his state of forsakenness with Christ's.

<sup>40</sup> Philip's attitude to Christmas is also described in The Life of PHG (331).

<sup>41</sup> See The Life of PHG (334). Edmund's source for this anecdote comes from a letter from Philip to himself dated 20

August 1868 now in Letters Father and Son in the CUL Manuscript Room (letter #11, Add.7018).

<sup>4 2</sup> Compare this sentence with a passage from the preface of The Life of PHG: "He was less in sympathy with the literary and scientific movement of our age than, perhaps, any writer or observer of equal distinction". He had "little in common with his contemporaries" (vii, viii).

<sup>4 3</sup> Philip Gosse also disliked Tennyson (Life of PHG 351).

<sup>4 4</sup> Edmund resembles Donne in his blurring of the sacred and the profane.

<sup>4 5</sup> Robert Browning: Personalialia (15).

<sup>4 6</sup> The poet as handmaid to God supports Edmund in his argument with his father over the relative holiness of science versus poetry. This debate occurs in a letter from son to father dated March 4th 1873 in Evan Charteris' The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse (52-53).

<sup>4 7</sup> In a footnote related to an 1909 letter from Gosse, André Gide is cited as expressing this sentiment in The Correspondence of André Gide and Edmund Gosse: "As far as I am aware it is impossible to imagine any school of thought more alien to a work of art . . . or even more hostile to it . . . than Calvinism. This is the reason why I broke with it as soon as I began writing" (46). The collection of the Gosse-Gide letters testifies to the affinity the two writers felt by merit of the similarities between their respective religious backgrounds.

<sup>4 8</sup> This was especially true in the nineteenth-century. Gosse wrote a novel called The Unequal Yoke (1886) about the social dynamics of church versus chapel.

<sup>4 9</sup> Here, Philip is allied with Taylor, who prays "artistically" rather than humbly or baldly.

## Chapter six Father and Son

If Edmund Gosse adopted a typologist's and artist's right to define other men's lives, then he also took typological and poetic "liberties" with the story of his own life in Father and Son. In his 1907 autobiography, Edmund "turns" against the typological expectations of his parents---defining himself away from the Samuel they expected him to become. He commits the sin of storytelling in order to escape the demands of a typologically-enforced "dedication".

Yet the typological constraints that Philip and Emily Gosse imposed on their son provided the means by which he learned to "fashion his inner life for himself" (251). Here, the Gosse family's ban on fiction and storytelling can be seen as an inadequate precaution, as there was enough storytelling in the Bible to nourish Edmund's literary sensibilities. Typological training was made to work against itself in Gosse's case, giving him the literary tools that were necessary to write his own life. He needed to write it in order to prevent his parents and the Biblical characters they sponsored from writing it for him.

The main purpose of this chapter is to chart Edmund's progressive movement from early typological training to typological transgressions and "the sin of storytelling" in Father and Son. This movement is ironic in that Edmund denied that his parents' typological readings could produce "art" or encourage the imagination, when, in actual fact, the "artistry" of their faith (and his father's "poetic" natural history) was at least as imaginative, if not more

so, than Edmund's imitative religious and literary performances. The latter's "double standard" is that he refuses to acknowledge the imaginative potential of the Puritan tradition and that of his parents, while at the same time he exploits this tradition for his own literary purposes. Yet rejection of Philip and Emily's theological and typological system did not automatically guarantee Edmund a place among the poetic elect. Originality was not ensured by "throwing off the yoke" of tradition.

This chapter will open with a brief examination of how Father and Son was evaluated and classified by Gosse's contemporaries before moving on to a more detailed analysis of the book itself. Contemporary reviews of Father and Son help to place the book's "fictional" qualities in the context of late Victorian and early Edwardian conventions concerning "truth" in autobiography and biography. Yet, apart from social convention, which forbade the writer to analyze his parents in graphic detail (after the manner of Philip's memorial to his wife), Edmund's "fictions" are an outgrowth of his typological training, in that he imitated typology's tendency to read experience symbolically, as well as its promiscuous attitude towards interpretation. Edmund takes liberties with his own story in the same way that he took liberties with the story of his father's life and the biographies of the poets.



## I. Contemporary Reviews of "Father and Son".

Edmund Gosse was 58 years old and an established critic, biographer, and man of letters when he published Father and Son on the 25th of October, 1907 (Thwaite 433). By then, Edmund had enjoyed his status as the House of Lords Librarian for three years, a position which, as Charteris speculates, facilitated the writing of Father and Son:

It was fortunate that his circumstances had changed, enabling him to write with a freedom he had never before experienced. His librarianship had put him in a position of security (Charteris 307).

Although Gosse's autobiography was published anonymously, "very little attempt was made to conceal the authorship. It seems to have been a ploy to arouse curiosity and increase comment" (Thwaite 433). For the most part, the public response was favorable, with criticism focussing on the propriety of analysing one's father in print. The critics seemed less interested in making aesthetic objections to the style or artistic arrangement of Gosse's autobiography than in questioning the author's motives.

The reviewers of Father and Son were ambivalent about how the book should be classified. Was it a work of fiction or a factual document? Critics were uncertain whether to read Gosse's autobiography as fact or fiction, a debate which parallels the problem of whether typology is history or allegory. Just as Edmund perceived that Philip and Emily Gosse sided with the literal interpretation of scripture over the figural, so there were reviewers who preferred to

read Father and Son as straightforwardly "true". Others were happier with it as fiction.

The question of fact versus fiction in Father and Son hinged on how "literally" Gosse's own preface to the autobiography was to be read. He opened the book with these words: "At the present hour, when fiction takes forms so ingenious and so specious, it is perhaps necessary to say that the following narrative, in all its parts . . . is scrupulously true" (33, emphasis added). Thus Edmund wanted his book to be read as if it were "literally" true.

Some reviewers were more willing to accept Gosse's truth claims than others. A review which emphatically stressed Father and Son's factual side appeared in the Church Quarterly Review for April-July 1908:

[Father and Son] gives us, with photographic realism, the account of a very unusual childhood, the childhood of a boy in whom the artistic temperament and love for beauty was strong, passed amid surroundings which seem, to our ideas, of almost inconceivable rigidity and narrowness, the parents being Plymouth Brethren (143).

It must be remembered that the Church Quarterly expresses the views of Anglicans, whose party-line would consist of an official disapproval of "extreme" dissenting groups like the Brethren. Yet the reviewer does not indulge in unrestrained Puritan-bashing and he genuinely seems to like the strong dissenting figure of Philip Henry Gosse.

Although the Church Quarterly Review article does not approve of the Gosse family's ban on fiction, it seems more comfortable with the idea that Father and Son itself is not a work of fiction. This uneasiness could perhaps be traced to a "literal" reading of Gosse's preface, a reading which

nevertheless recognizes the possibility that he might be lying. A parallel might be drawn between the truth claims of autobiography and the Bible, claims which can disguise a certain degree of rhetoric. If Father and Son's scriptural elements--its self-professed veracity, its use of typology--provide the basis for artistic lying, then these "lies" could perhaps call into question the potential for fiction in the Bible itself.

For the Church Quarterly reviewer, Gosse's book raises an important question: "What is the real legitimate relation between religion and the things of this life?" (149). He is careful to affirm the legitimacy of artistic endeavour, but nevertheless the article ends with a reassertion of the importance of "reading the Scriptures with our children" (157). The fact that extensive scripture-readings only served to alienate a child like Edmund and add fuel to his protest against his father did not influence the reviewer's conclusions on this issue.

Edmund's Biblical education is implicitly sanctioned by the Church Quarterly Review. Yet could the Gosses have erred on the side of succeeding too well in their educational projects--making the Bible so familiar that to read it was to re-write it? Edmund's tropological intimacy with Samuel was such that he felt free to take "liberties" with the latter's story and therefore his own. He took these liberties even further in his autobiography, often to the point of writing fiction.

Literary journals drew different conclusions about the fact versus fiction debate in Father and Son. A review

dated November 30, 1907 in The Academy, gently questions the truth claims that the "anonymous" author makes, (later admitting that the secret of Gosse's authorship has "not been kept for long" (189)):

This anonymous book is one of the most fascinating and interesting pieces of literature that has been issued of recent years. Were we not, in the preface to it, specifically informed that the narrative "in all its parts. . . . is scrupulously true," we should have judged it to be fiction by a skilled hand, founded upon fact and personal experience, but either way, as unadulterated fact or unadulterated fiction, it is, as the author offers it to us, a document of the highest value (188).

The reviewer is not interested in pressing Gosse too hard on the sensitive question of scrupulousness. Instead, he winks at the author and declares: "it boots not whether the story is fact or fiction--it is true to life" (189). He refuses to read Father and Son "literally", keeping his mind open to the relative nature of truth. Being "true to life" might offer a higher truth than mere factual accuracy, and thus the reviewer implicitly supports Gosse's statement in the Preface to Father and Son: "this book is nothing if it is not a genuine slice of life" (34). In his reading of Gosse's autobiography, the Academy review maintains an urbane, tolerant attitude, refusing to commit himself about "ethical" questions which he perceives to be irrelevant to aesthetic presentation<sup>1</sup>.

The review of Father and Son in The Spectator of November 30, 1907 also calls attention to the book's claim to truthfulness. He describes how the author "introduces us to his hero--a little boy. We follow his fortunes from infancy to adolescence, and we are told that his history is true"

(857, emphasis added). The Spectator review further exposes Father and Son's "literary" bias when it describes the book's "tragic" distortions:

Long expeditions upon the seashore with his father in search of specimens delighted the London-bred child, but, with exquisite literary skill, the bright side of his life is never allowed to take what must in real life have been its true value. Our author never forgets his appointed task of showing the "essential" nature of the tragedy and the "superficial" nature of the comedy he records (858).

The reviewer implies that the shape of Father and Son has been dictated, not by truth, but by the tragic premises set up in Gosse's preface: "There was an extraordinary mixture of comedy and tragedy . . . and those who are affected by the pathos of it will not need to have it explained to them that the comedy was superficial and the tragedy essential (34). Gosse set out to write a tragedy and used his "literary skill" to bend the facts to accommodate his narrative vision. Thwaite would agree with The Spectator's assessment, as her biography explains how Edmund exaggerated the feeling that he was an unwanted child and the loneliness of his childhood (Thwaite 7,35).

The Athenaeum of January 4, 1908, reads Gosse's book in mythic terms:

Its real subject is a difference as great as that between light and darkness, a conflict no less profound and eternal than that typified in Oriental dualism as existing from the dawn of things (7).

The psychological dualism of Edmund's two selves (reminiscent of Augustine) is interpreted in a larger, more universal sense. Yet the epic qualities of Father and Son are not seen as contradictory to its role as an

"illuminating study" and "historical document of great value" (6).

Father and Son's historical value remains intact, despite the fact that Gosse's memories may have been coloured by the shaping light of the imagination. The Athenaeum reviewer admits that:

It is, of course, possible that the writer's literary skill has embellished some of the incidents, and that his feelings at the moment were not always of that elaborately self-conscious character which he now believes them to have been (6).

Like The Academy review, The Athenaeum seems to take an indulgent view towards the fictional elements in Father and Son, reminding the reader of the subjective nature of memory (6). Yet despite the generous allowances made by many of the reviewers, there remains some degree of ambivalence over how far to credit Gosse's book with fictional or factual qualities.

Edmund Gosse's obituary in The London Mercury of June 1928 is more precise in its definition of Father and Son, but this definition still seems to contain contradictory elements:

Father and Son . . . combines the biography of his father with an early autobiography of himself, [and] he presents the reader with an unforgettable series of mid-Victorian and middle-class vignettes, [and] he registers the stages in the development of the aesthetic in a typical sensitive boy and all is done in a style lucid, orderly, melodious, after the best French models (117).

Depending upon how strictly a person defines the biographical project as "historical" in nature, the words "vignette" and "aesthetic" could either seem appropriate or inappropriate<sup>2</sup>. This ambivalence over the classification of

autobiography brings us back to the typological and Biblical tension between history and symbolism.

It could be argued that one of the assumptions of theological thinking is that there are ethical standards which exist outside of the text and effect its evaluation as a work of art. An ethical problem that was taken up by the reviewers of Father and Son concerned the question of filial responsibility. How far was it ethical or even in good taste to write a book which exposes the faults and weaknesses of one's father? The article in The Church Quarterly Review devotes the most copy to the problem, arguing that Gosse's public analysis of his father threatens to undermine Father and Son's aesthetic value. The language in the following passage seems very ambivalent:

That a son should minutely dissect and describe his father's character has in it for many minds something naturally repellent, even though the picture be shielded by a tenuous veil of anonymity. And yet as frank and unflinching as is the son's analysis of his father's temperament and his own, we gladly confess . . . that we lay aside the book with a very real and sincere respect for the older man; and without that . . . its author would have counted even the achievement of a literary masterpiece a poor reward for his labour (148-49).

The passage begins and ends with a negative judgement on the son. Not only is his literary project "naturally repellent", it cannot hope to achieve the status of "legitimate" masterpiece, even if it deserved to be called a masterpiece on the grounds of artistic merit alone (which the reviewer believes it does not). The book is not too bad, but it would have been even worse if the father did not eventually emerge as a figure worthy of respect. The reviewer values filial duty over literary achievement,

bringing ethical standards to bear on the text which have nothing to do with literary style or technique.

The Academy does not go so far as to say that the son's dissection of the father undermines the artistic quality of Father and Son. It concedes that it "is a great book, but for our part we scarcely like this close anatomisation by a son of a father" (189). The book succeeds at the expense of Philip Henry Gosse, and he has the dubious honour of inspiring a story that was written in the spirit of revenge (something that Edmund said he did not recommend in his article "The Custom of Biography"). Yet the writer of The Athenaeum review comes to Gosse's defence:

In spite of what has been said on the question of taste, we cannot see that the writer is to be blamed for this account of his father; it seems to us neither disrespectful nor untender, but eminently delicate and fair; nor do any of the jokes seem to us ungenerous (6).

This reviewer refuses to read Father and Son in the same way that the Church Quarterly Review does, demonstrating that the ethical assumptions that contemporary readers brought to Gosse's autobiography varied considerably. However, the majority of the reviewers agree that a certain degree of "lying" is necessary to protect the father from too close an "anatomisation".



## II. The Typological and Tropological Expectations of Edmund's Childhood.

We leave Gosse partially defended against the charges of disrespect and turn to the text of the contested book itself. It is important to note here that the question of fictionality which exercised (and still exercises) the critics is one of the central questions which plagued Edmund's childhood. The child whose mother forbade the sin of storytelling gets caught red-handed half a century later. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to piece together some of the intellectual and educational preconditions which made literary sins possible, and perhaps necessary, for Edmund Gosse. An examination of the typological and fictional elements of the book will reveal that these elements are more intertwined than Edmund would like to admit.

The relationship between typological thinking and storytelling is a dialectical one. Imitation of types leads to creation of a new character, and copying leads to a fictionalized replacement of the character that was copied. The tradition which Edmund defined as a stumbling block to the sin of storytelling actually served as its most valued accomplice. Moreover, the freedom of interpretation which typology's allegorical side offered was the same freedom which Edmund appropriated in order to escape the more coercive elements of typology, i.e., the yoke of his dedication as a Samuel. Yet, as seen in the preceding

chapter, Gosse was as capable as his parents of exploiting the "violence" inherent in typology for his own purposes.

There were fundamental typological expectations which served as the determining features of Gosse's literary and theological inheritance. These "great expectations" served as necessary preconditions for his development as typological conformist as well as literary sinner. As discussed in chapter two, the Biblical type reserved for Edmund was Samuel, the fulfilment of whose destiny constituted his parent's "Great Scheme":

In their ecstasy, my parents had taken me, as Elkanah and Hannah had long ago taken Samuel, from their mountain-home of Ramathaim-Zophim down to sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. They had girt me about with a linen ephod, and had hoped to leave me there; 'as long as he liveth,' they had said, 'he shall be lent unto the Lord' (F&S 212).

He (Samuel) and me (Edmund) get confused in this passage, the place where there should be a third-person personal pronoun is left open for a "me" to be inserted. For example, "they had girt me" stands out as a particularly blatant projection of self into an archaic text, with Edmund substituting Samuel's name for his own. This superimposition of "me" over scripture (or the attempt to imbed the "me" into its very core) is the essence of tropologically-applied typology.

Edmund and his parents engage in an interpersonal exchange with scripture--a mutual writing and reading process which alters the identity of both reader and scripture--and this brand of tropological reading is what made the Great Scheme psychologically possible for the elder Gosses. If Hannah and Elkanah were types of themselves,

then their son had no choice but to be their Biblical as well as biological offspring: Samuel/Edmund (a blurring of distinctions reminiscent of Gray/Gosse, Donne/Gosse etc.).

The elder Gosses appropriated a Biblical inheritance for themselves, and this inheritance was requisitioned on the authority of tropological readings of the scriptures. Edmund describes how his father read the Bible out loud in a resonant voice, "treating every phrase as if it were part of a personal message or of thrilling family history" (F&S 224). Philip's imaginative projection of himself into the very pages of the Bible was the source of his determination to make a projectile of his son, the desired target being I Samuel 1-2. Just as the book takes its name from Samuel, so Philip Gosse hoped his son would derive his identity from the character Samuel.

The ostensible humility that is necessary to submerge one's identity into a Biblical text and character can disguise a profound arrogance. In the Gosses' case, this brand of disguised spiritual pride found expression in their belief that they knew the mind and will of God. Thus, they served as their own priests and spiritual mentors, abrogating to themselves absolute authority on matters concerning religion in general (F&S 43-44). We saw in chapter five how this mind-reading ability was transferred to Edmund, where he made use of it as a means to see into the hearts and minds of poets. But when he was a child, he suffered under the authority that his parents laid claim to by merit of their intimate knowledge of the divine. It meant that it was impossible to argue with them, especially

with his father after Emily died and Omphalos was rejected (Thwaite 37).

Philip's religious authority was derived from personal messages that he discovered in the scriptures:

He assumed that he had private knowledge of the Divine Will, and he would meet my temporizing arguments by . . . appeals to a higher authority,-- 'But what does my Lord tell me in Paul's Letter to the Philippians?' It was the prerogative of his faith to know, and of his character to overpower objection; between these two millstones I was rapidly ground to powder (F&S 244).

Again, it is the juxtaposition of "my" and "me" next to the message of Paul that asserts the reality of personal possession of the scriptures; Philip exemplifies the process of tropological thinking when he reads Philippians as if it contains a message just for him. If Philip Gosse was the master of texts like Philippians and I Samuel, he subsumed his son under a similar mastery, enmeshing him in a plan of salvation that wrote his name into the very fabric of scripture itself. This species of enforced intimacy with scripture is what served as a justification and precondition for the suffocating typological expectations that the elder Gosses imposed on Edmund, their only begotten son. What was spiritual enlightenment for the father became a heavy burden for the son.

As discussed in chapter two, Emily Gosse was convinced of her status as a nineteenth-century Hannah, and she dedicated her son to the Lord in imitation of this pious type of "Christian" motherhood<sup>3</sup>. Edmund was presented to the small Brethren community in Hackney when he was only six weeks old:

Mr. Balfour . . . held a private service in the parlour, and 'prayed for our child, that he may be the Lord's'. This was the opening act of that 'dedication' which was never henceforward forgotten, and of which the following pages will endeavour to describe the results. Around my tender and unconscious spirit was flung the luminous web, the light and elastic but impermeable veil, which was hoped would keep me 'unspotted from the world' (F&S 39).

The son of a woman who disapproved of the stage<sup>1</sup> nevertheless employs the theatrical metaphor of "the opening act" to describe Mr. Balfour's dedication performance. Denied the creative outlet of storytelling, Emily substitutes the shaping power of the artist for that of the parent, becoming a "stage mother" who trains her son for the public religious role he is destined to play.

Edmund borrows a metaphor from the field of the visual arts when he describes his mother's "spiritual determinations":

They are, in their outline, I suppose, vaguely common to many religious mothers, but there are few indeed who fill up the sketch with so firm a detail as she did. Once again I am indebted to her secret notes. . . . Thus she wrote when I was two months old: "We have given him to the Lord; and we trust that He will really manifest him to be His own, if he grow up; and if the Lord take him early, we will not doubt that he is taken to Himself (F&S 39-40).

The power of these secret notes to write the life of a "dedicated" child should not be underestimated. Here, Father and Son could be interpreted as counter-writing, an attempt to appropriate the right of an author to control the destiny of his or her characters.

Gosse writes the story of his life in order to re-write the secret "book of Edmund" that his mother composed. He reserves the right to "fill up the sketch" with his own

brush, and thus reinforces his professed identity as painter of portraits (of himself and others). Both he and his mother sketch and fill out the details of other people's biographies. Edmund just resents it when he is victimized by the biographical sketcher.

The "sketch" image is also a familiar one to typology, although the word "shadow" more accurately captures the relationship between type and antitype. Chapter eight of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains the relationship between the temple of the Jewish dispensation and that of the Christian dispensation. The Hebrew high priests "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). Even typology leaves some gaps and spaces for history to fill in later, but Emily Gosse wanted to speed typological progress by colouring in the shadowy sketch before her son had a chance to occupy the open ground between typological expectation and ultimate fulfilment.

If Edmund conceived the biographer's role to be that of one who sketches, selects, composes, and arranges, then he follows his mother's philosophy of parenthood to an uncanny degree of conformity. Both biographer and parent treat their creations as something to be moulded, shaped, and constructed; this is the dark and coercive side of typology. Emily sees herself as an architect, Edmund as a portrait-painter. In Father and Son, Edmund tries to paint an alternative version of himself in order to escape the defining pattern of his mother's early sketch.

As chapter three relates, Emily died too soon to see her parental design realized, but she tried to secure and fasten

Edmund even more firmly to her proposed typological program on her deathbed. Edmund's version of the deathbed scene in A Memorial reads as follows:

She became agitated, and she repeated two or three times: 'Take our lamb, and walk with me!' Then my Father comprehended, and pressed me forward; her hand fell softly upon mine and she seemed content. Thus was my dedication, that had begun in my cradle, sealed with the most solemn, the most poignant and irresistible insistence, at the death-bed of the holiest and purest of women (F&S 81).

Out of the dying mother's mouth fall words from the Bible, combining maternal with scriptural authority, thus doubling the pressure of guilt on the dedicated child. Emily was described by her biographers as a "testimony" and an "epistle", and in the passage above her dying message to her son and the scriptural message become one and the same.

Heather Henderson's The Victorian Self (1989) examines Father and Son's typological elements in detail, and she devotes some critical attention to Emily's deathbed scene:

the language used by Gosse's parents is above all the language of Saint John the Divine. On her deathbed Gosse's mother believes herself to be about to enter the promise of Revelation. Her dying words, "I shall walk with him in white" (61) echo Christ's promise to Sardis, "They shall walk with me in white" (Rev. 3:4) (130).

According to Henderson, Emily's command to bring "our lamb" to her bed for a blessing reflects a fundamentally Christian understanding of the sacrificial lamb: "In Revelation the Lamb (capitalized) becomes a symbol for the Son of God: "A Lamb stood on the mount Sion. . . . (14:1)" (130).

Henderson further argues that Edmund identifies with the sacrificial Hebrew lamb rather than the Christian Lamb (130-131). Yet typological thinking dictates that the two

conceptions of the Lamb cannot be read apart from one another; Christ is just as much a sacrifice as Isaac, and the Old and New Testament lambs are by no means mutually exclusive. Moreover, the competing lamb-interpretations testify to the capacity of typology to generate meaning outside the boundaries of its self-professed historicity. Typology can be read as a creative activity whose "fictional" elements make for an unstable polyvalency and whose truth-claims rest on shaky foundations. Once again, Gosse's contention that typology is primarily a "literal" method of reading is undermined.

### III. The Results of Edmund's Dedication: "Theatrical" Public Baptism and Ministerial Expectations.

Edmund's public baptism at the age of ten was the culmination of the typological and "theatrical" training he received (theatrical in the sense that the Bible provided roles--Isaac, Samuel, Christ--for him to play). His father practised the art of baptism by manipulating the other members of the Brethren community in Marychurch and acting as "stage manager" to the whole proceedings (F&S 155). What made the baptism of such an abnormally young communicant<sup>5</sup> possible was Philip Henry's special doctrine of unconscious conversion:

there was or there might be, another class of persons, whom early training, separation from the world, and the care of godly parents had so early familiarized with the acceptable calling of Christ that their conversion had occurred, unperceived and therefore unrecorded, at an extraordinarily early age. It would be in vain to look for a repetition of the phenomenon in those cases. The heavenly fire



must not be expected to descend a second time; the lips are touched with the burning coal once, and once only (F&S 152).

We can see why Philip's doctrine would make the other saints suspicious, as "[none] of their own children had ever been so much as suggested for membership (153). Edmund's baptism, like his dedication, is an artful "set up" which derives its authority from Philip Gosse and the God of his imagination, not some Great Scheme of salvation external to himself. The reader can detect how the father "rigged" the baptism, in the sense that he defined the criteria for conversion according to his and his wife's system of religious education--"early training", "the care of godly parents" etc. The "causes" of Edmund's spiritual success as a Samuel are really premeditated effects that his parents self-consciously cultivated. Thus the son becomes the victim of a typological hermeneutic circle.

Yet Edmund eventually manages to escape the circle by repeating (and exposing) the theatrical terms under which he was imprisoned<sup>6</sup>. If his dedication was an "opening act" and his baptism a public performance, then his deconversion consisted of him recognizing "the theatrical attitude I had adopted" (F&S 235). "Adopted" is a good word to describe the relationship between the Gosse family and their Biblical "ancestors". Moreover, Edmund was forced to adopt a typological definition of himself that he came to condemn as fictional and artificial. This is ironic because the alternative identity he sought was primarily that of a poet and creator of fictions, thus providing another example of how his Biblical training served as both hindrance and help

in relation to the project of unravelling the web of his dedication. Gosse continually relies on typological methods in order to get even with those who abused it at his expense.

Philip and Emily Gosse envisaged the fruits of their son's dedication in terms of the propagation of the Gospels. Defined by the Bible, Edmund in turn should try to encourage typological duplicates, holy clones. When he was a little boy, his parents would "discuss, in my presence, the direction which my shining talents would take. In consequence of my dedication to 'the Lord's Service', the range of possibilities was much restricted" (F&S 52).

Philip suggested missionary service, but Emily

preferred to believe that I should be the Charles Wesley of my age, 'or perhaps' she had the candour to admit, 'merely the George Whitefield'. I cannot recollect the time when I did not understand that I was going to be a minister of the Gospel (52).

Despite the ironic tone of these passages, there remains a sense of resignation, a feeling that there was never a time when Edmund's possibilities were anything other than "much restricted". As we have seen in chapter five, Edmund may have fulfilled his parents' expectations more fully than he realized when he took upon himself the role of biographer; the Lord's servant became a literary servant.

If Emily filled out the sketch of her son's career and temperament very early in his life, Philip shared his wife's ability to realize typological dreams in "firm detail". At the approximate age of eleven, Edmund became aware of the concrete form his dedication was to take when his father, in

"idle" conversation, identified himself with Simeon, applying Luke 2:29 to his paternal situation:

he was led to speak of the day when I should ascend the pulpit to preach my first sermon. 'Oh! if I may be there, out of sight, and hear the gospel message proclaimed from your lips, then I shall say, "My poor work is done. Oh! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit".' I cannot express the dismay which this aspiration gave me, the horror with which I anticipated such a nunc dimittis. . . . The clearness of the personal image affected me as all the texts and prayers and predictions had failed to do (F&S 167)'. .

The Luke passage, like the one from 1 Samuel, is not allowed to become just a story for Edmund. His father sees Biblical stories as scripts to be literally acted out in the life of his son, and the son reacts with horror. It is not so much typology proper that is horrifying, but when it comes alive tropologically--a Simeon rising from the pages of Luke to claim his nineteenth-century victim. For Edmund, typology is much "safer" when it is a matter of textual comparison between Old Testament type and New Testament antitype. But when Edmund himself is expected to become an antitype of Christ and preach the gospel, the threat to his identity is painfully manifest. The direct personal message of scripture is a comfort and support to Philip, but for Edmund it is a nightmare; father and son are both defined by scripture, but the difference is that Philip violently projects himself into the Bible while Edmund is merely dragged along with him. The father is an active typological participant, his son a passive one.

#### IV. The Sin of Storytelling and Edmund's Perception of the Imaginative "Failures" of His Parents.

Now that some of the typological pressures that Edmund experienced have been examined, I would like to turn to the specific strictures against fiction that Philip and Emily deployed. For them, the only stories that were true and legitimate were Biblical stories, and Edmund's education was not to be tainted with secular stories that told "lies". Emily, and to a lesser degree, Philip, believed that storytelling was a sin, in addition to novel-reading and attendance at the theatre. Edmund's biographies of seventeenth-century writers accused Puritans of crimes against literature, and ultimately this judgement was extended to Philip and Emily. He perceived them to be enemies of the Beautiful.

The Church Quarterly Review seems to agree with Gosse, in that the reviewer sees the problem of Puritanism to be one of aesthetic presentation: "Not the least important . . . of the morals to be drawn from this book [Father and Son] is the warning to religious men and women to set their religion in an attractive light to the younger generation" (156). Philip Gosse could have improved his "tasteless . . . mode of presentation" (157). The author of the Athenaeum review blames the spirit of Puritanism itself for the "prosaic" atmosphere in which Edmund was raised. According to the reviewer, Puritanism bears an

affinity to the scientific rather than the romantic temperament. . . . It is . . . the harshness, the certitude in regard both to this world and the next--

in a word the prose of the rationalistic spirit--that is to blame (6).

The Athenaeum review argues that Puritanism, especially that which follows the older models, suffers under the regime of a "tortured literalism and barren logomachy" (6). Brought up within the typological framework of literal prose, the misunderstood child of a Puritan longs to be a poet. However, I disagree with the conclusions of the Church Quarterly Review and the Athenaeum because I believe typology, and the Puritan autobiographical tradition which relies upon it, to be ultimately profoundly poetic. Philip Gosse himself--the author of Omphalos and The Romance of Natural History--is a testimony to the fact that the romantic temperament can be compatible with science and Puritan religion.

Yet before I try to argue in favour of the elder Gosses as artists, an examination of Edmund's evaluation of their aesthetic capacities is in order. He declares that: "My Mother was a Puritan in grain" (F&S 42), but she was not necessarily born that way. On the contrary, he wonders whether she might have been "intended by nature to be a novelist?" (49). As discussed in chapter one, Emily's 1835 "Recollections" record the source of her "impression that to 'tell a story', that is, to compose fictitious narrative of any kind, was a sin" (48). She learned to be ashamed of story-telling from a Calvinist governess (49).

Emily circumvented the ban on fiction by writing about "legitimate" topics--spiritual autobiography, the dedication of her son--in legitimate forms, i.e. tracts, prayers,

journals. Her literary "calling" and that of her husband did not follow conventional secular patterns. Edmund writes:

But how infinitely removed in their aims, their habits, their ambitions from 'literary' people of the present day, words are scarcely adequate to describe. . . . For each there had been no poet later than Byron, and neither had read a romance since, in childhood, they had dipped into the Waverley Novels as they appeared in succession. For each the various forms of imaginative and scientific literature were merely means of improvement and profit (F&S 38).

Yet this assertion is blatantly contradicted in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, where Edmund gives an account of his father's favorite poets<sup>8</sup>.

The earnest attitude to literature which Father and Son imputes to Philip and Emily contrasts with the adult Edmund's, who, as Peter Abbs notes, only required that it gave him pleasure (Intro. to F&S 15)<sup>9</sup>. Edmund's parents, on the other hand, found pleasure "nowhere but in the Word of God" (F&S 38). Philip Gosse refused to read Shakespeare and composed for his son a frequently inconsistent and eclectic reading list that outlined what was allowed and what was forbidden<sup>10</sup>. For example, Walter Scott's Waverley Novels were not acceptable

on the ground that those tales gave false and disturbing pictures of life, and would lead away my attention from heavenly things. I do not fully apprehend what distinction he drew between the poems, which he permitted, and the novels, which he refused. But I suppose he regarded a work in verse as more artificial, and therefore less likely to make a realistic impression, than one in prose (F&S 190).

Philip Gosse provides his own interpretation of the sin of storytelling, further complicating the issue by drawing "distinctions" between specific kinds of fiction, such as

poetry versus prose. What seems curious is the fact that he forbids novels because they are not fictional enough, whereas the artificiality of poetry is what qualifies it as acceptable reading-material. As long as Edmund is alerted to the "lies" in poetry, he may escape being seduced by them; he is not personally or tropologically drawn in. Novels, on the other hand, do not have enough lying in them to warn the reader that they are presenting "false . . . pictures of life". Novels are too much like the Bible for comfort, in the sense that their realistic presentations can seem historical and "true". Thus they leave the tropologically vulnerable at risk of being influenced personally by the events and characters within the narrative. This is also true in the case of biography, where Edmund read himself into the "true stories" of other men.

If the distinction between reader and novel or reader and biography can become blurred, as it does in the tropological system--where Bible and believer become blurred--then novels are dangerous competitors to scripture. Moreover, the similarity of response that novels provoke could conceivably cast doubt on the legitimacy of scripture. If novels and the Bible both wield so much power over a reader, who is to say that the authority of the novel is not equally "legitimate"?

By sheltering Edmund from the evils of fiction, his parents actually made him more gullible and vulnerable to its rhetoric. The literal approach to reading that he learned from his parents is what made Edmund put as much

faith in the scrap of romance he found on a trunk as he did in the Bible:

It will be recollected that the idea of fiction, of a deliberately invented story, had been kept from me with entire success. I therefore implicitly believed the tale in the lid of the trunk to be a true account of the sorrows of a lady of title (F&S 59).

By allowing the Bible to operate as a foundational and identity-defining text, the Gosses unintentionally cleared the ground for the infiltration of literary influence, an influence that could compete with the typological and tropological power of scripture.

Edmund describes what religious reading meant for his mother:

Although her faith was so strong and simple, my Mother possessed no quality of the mystic . . . she had formed a definite conception of the absolute, unmodified and historical veracity, in its direct and obvious sense, of every statement contained within the covers of the Bible. For her, and for my Father, nothing was symbolic, nothing allegorical or allusive in any part of Scripture, except what was, in so many words, proffered as a parable or a picture (F&S 77-78).

Just as twentieth-century critics have insisted on the historical legitimacy of typology (wanting to "purge" and purify its allegorical features), so Edmund contended that Emily and Philip denied the existence of the figural dimension of scripture. Edmund expands upon the "literalness" theme, stating baldly:

Both my parents, I think, were devoid of sympathetic imagination; in my Father, I am sure, it was singularly absent . . . there was no mysticism about them. They went rather to the opposite extreme, to the cultivation of a rigid and iconoclastic literalness (F&S 78).

Yet, as Abraham and His Children and Gosse's Narrative Tracts demonstrate, Emily and Philip's writings were



influenced by allegory and parables, thus providing a check to Edmund's estimate of their literal-mindedness. Moreover, despite their preference for the letter of the text over the spirit, the elder Gosses were nevertheless drawn to the Bible's books of prophecy, particularly Revelation. According to Edmund, the rich array of "solemn and splendid visions" were not interpreted poetically, but instead were perceived as "positive statements, in guarded language, describing events which were to happen" (78)<sup>11</sup>. In Edmund's eyes, this method of reading was illustrative of the same rationalistic and prosaic spirit which the Athenaeum reviewer complained about. Yet once again this "positive" spirit came to work against the Gosses, for while Edmund may have been vulnerable to the wiles of fiction, he was also trained to view the world through sceptical eyes:

So far as my 'dedication' was concerned, I can but think that my parents were in error thus to exclude the imaginary from my outlook upon facts. They desired to make me truthful; the tendency was to make me positive and sceptical. Had they wrapped me in the soft folds of supernatural fancy, my mind might have been longer content to follow their traditions in an unquestioning spirit (F&S 50).

Gosse returns to the analysis of his father's unimaginative qualities several times throughout Father and Son, as if he is lamenting the fact that Philip failed to provide him with a poetic inheritance.

## V. Defence of the Imaginative Elements in Puritanism.

Despite Edmund's criticisms, there was more imaginative potential in the Puritan tradition and his parents' typological reading methods than he was prepared to acknowledge. As this thesis argues, it was Edmund himself who, for the most part, failed to inherit the artistic tendencies of his mother and father. He claimed that "sympathetic imagination" was impossible for them, but what is more sympathetic than projecting one's life into the life of a person who lived in Palestine hundreds of centuries previously? A leap of the imagination is necessary in order for typology and tropology to be effective. If the creation of a viable metaphor involves the yoking of two disparate images together, then the creation of a typological team--antitype and type--involves a similar capacity to "seize an analogy" and discover similarities in seemingly different things (what Wordsworth called "seeing into the life of things").

Philip and Emily's ability to create analogies was bequeathed to their son, as can be demonstrated in an anecdote where a woman shows four-year-old Edmund a picture of a human skeleton:

'There! you don't know what that is, do you?' Upon which, immediately and very archly, I replied, 'Isn't it a man with the meat off?' This was thought wonderful, and, as it is supposed that I had never had the phenomenon explained to me, it certainly displays some quickness in seizing an analogy (F&S 51).

Another feature of the Gosses' system of typological and tropological aesthetics was their deep intimacy with

Biblical characters. Reading the Bible as if it were family history, the Gosses' closely identified with their Biblical "ancestors", and this familiarity must necessarily imply sympathy. To be sympathetic is to put yourself in another's position, and this is what they literally did--occupying the personal space of Hannah, Elkanah, Simeon, Abraham, and Job. They refused to let the differences of historical context and culture separate them from these Biblical characters and the Biblical world in which they believed. Edmund explains how his parents

read injunctions to the Corinthian converts without any suspicion that what was apposite in dealing with half-breed Achaian colonists of the first century might not exactly apply to respectable English men and women of the nineteenth (F&S 78).

Tropological readings like these caused Edmund to declare Philip and Emily "devoid of sympathetic imagination" (78). Yet perhaps he is being too hard on them, especially when he condemns as prosaic the very things which best illustrate their spiritual creativity. The half-indulgent, half-condescending tone of an urbane and worldly narrator often surfaces in Father and Son, just as it did in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse.

The capacity to read yourself into the scriptures and other people's biographies implies artistic sensitivity. For poetic sensibility includes a passionate capacity to read the thoughts and words of other men as if they were written just for you, as André Gide declared in relation to Father and Son in a 1926 letter: "[it is] a book that I have lived with and felt was written for me, one with the power to stir up the most intrusive echoes" (Gosse/Gide

Correspondence 187). In a sense, Gide read Father and Son tropologically, and by extension typology and tropology can also be interpreted as "artistic" and ways of reading. Edmund inherited an autobiographical world-view from his parents and it later came to operate within his numerous biographies--he read his life into the poets' lives. His own imaginative capacity owed more to his parents than he realized.

Gosse himself contradicts his portrait of the father as a inartistic, unsympathetic fanatic many times throughout Father and Son<sup>12</sup>. Philip is often portrayed as a tragic figure, thus supporting Edmund's claims in the preface that "the tragedy [was] essential" (34). The father is a Romantic individualist, a loner, someone who reminds his son of the solitary integrity of a Donne or Patmore. Like Mark Rutherford, he is idealistic, a man concerned with intellectual principles--a Puritan Don Quixote. For example, when his son left home for a career in London, Philip maintained a "beautiful faith" in Edmund's moral strength: "my Father did not, in his uplifted Quixotism, allow himself to fancy me guilty of any moral misbehaviour, but concentrated his fears entirely upon my faith" (F&S 239).

Philip Gosse prayed theatrically, read the Bible dramatically, and had a fantastic and completely sincere faith in the Second Coming. It takes imaginative faith to believe that the Lord will literally come to fetch you before death. In this sense, Edmund's "artistic" difficulties seem to stem from the fact that he could never

compete with his parents' religious performances. Philip supplicated the Lord with "dramatic emphasis" and was a heroic "militant of the soul"<sup>13</sup>--probing the spiritual condition of strangers and refusing to eat with Unitarians. Emily wrote tracts, preached to cancer patients, and attracted adoring female disciples. In comparison, Edmund's tepid faith and hollow prayers could only seem dull. The problem did not lie in an unimaginative upbringing. On the contrary, Edmund had trouble living up to his parents' creative zeal, much less surpassing it.

Father and Son provides some examples of the author's own failures of the imagination. In his younger days particularly, Edmund is flummoxed by the symbolic elements in language. The allegorical and metaphorical elements in the Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, confused him:

Some glimmer of a suspicion that he was sailing on the wrong tack must . . . have broken in upon him when we had reached the eight and ninth chapters of Hebrews. . . . Suddenly by my flushing up with anger and saying, 'O how I do hate that Law,' my Father perceived . . . that I took the Law to be a person of malignant temper from whose cruel bondage . . . some excellent person was crying out to be delivered. I wished to hit Law with my fist, for being so mean and unreasonable (F&S 92-93)<sup>14</sup>.

Child though he was, Edmund had learned to personalize and become passionately involved in what he read. Yet he was still unable to see the full range of possible meanings for "Law", because he was interpreting the text on one level of meaning only--reading "Law" as if it were a name and not a concept. Philip's awareness of the interpretive possibilities of Biblical passages contradicts Edmund's perception of his father as a "literal" reader.

Another incident which illustrates the emotional power of names for Edmund was the time when he wanted to go to Primrose Hill after a fit of hysterics. That he did not question the power of the name to confer a primrosy reality on the landscape set Edmund up for a bitter disappointment: "names have always appealed directly to my imagination. . . . But at length . . . a miserable acclivity stole into view. . . . whereupon I burst into tears . . ." (F&S 62).

Henderson detects the rhetoric that is in operation in this passage, explaining how its purpose is to demonstrate Philip's insensitivity

to the link between sublime mountain landscapes and religious experience. Interestingly, one cause of the child's disappointment is that, like his parents, he regards language in the most literal way: Primrose Hill must be carpeted with primroses. But the adult autobiographer downplays this (131-132).

Gosse confers on himself the imaginative power he denies his father ("names have always appealed to my imagination") and he presents the Primrose vignette to the reader in order to support this self-interpretation. Yet, as Henderson points out, this passage serves to emphasize his own interpretive limitations. Is it coincidence that he often calls his parents unimaginative when they are being creative, and styles himself imaginative when he himself is failing to see the figural dimension of things? There seems to be a measure of wish-fulfilment present in the definitions of character and temperament that Edmund provides. A book ostensibly about a misunderstood and sensitive artist can also be read as an insensitive document that misunderstands the parents' creative qualities.

Edmund, like his parents, can be accused of the "sin" of literalness<sup>15</sup>. For instance, the symbolic language of Mrs. Pewings, a member of Philip Gosse's Brethren congregation at Marychurch, proved confusing:

Not infrequently, persons who had fallen into sin repented of it under my Father's penetrating ministrations. They were apt in their penitence to use strange symbolic expressions. I remember Mrs. Pewings . . . saying to me, 'Oh! blessed Child, you're wonderin' to zee old Pewings here again, but He have rolled away my mountain!' For once, I was absolutely at a loss, but she meant that the Lord had removed the load of her sins, and restored her to a state of grace (F&S 165).

Here, "saints" like Mrs. Pewings read experience more symbolically than Edmund; her interpretations resemble those of allegorical Brethren writers like Jukes and Soltau. Thus, Edmund's evaluations of the Plymouth Brethren tradition and his parents' "literal" world-view are further undermined.

#### VI.i. Edmund's Religious Education,

Chapter two provided a preliminary examination of the pedagogical practices of Edmund's parents. To more fully consider the typological and artistic legacy that was left by Philip and Emily Gosse, I would like to focus on the religious education they gave their son as it is described in Father and Son. Edmund's education provides clues concerning his development as a potential Samuel and as an artist. As could be expected, his religious training began with the study and internalization of the scriptures. Philip "laboured long and unsuccessfully to make me learn by

heart hymns, psalms and chapters of Scripture, in which I always failed ignominiously and with tears" (F&S 48).

Edmund's tears may allude to Esau's tears, as described in the Epistle to the Hebrews 12:16-17:

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

This is a passage which haunted Bunyan when he was agonizing over the condition of his soul in Grace Abounding (43). It seems to be tugging at Gosse's conscience at an unconscious level as well. The scriptural passages that his father tried to teach him constitute Edmund's spiritual birthright, and by refusing to receive this biblical inheritance, he deprives himself of the blessing. Hence the tears of guilt and remorse. For his part, Philip could not understand this failure, "for he himself had an extremely retentive textual memory" (F&S 48). Over the course of his life, he committed a phenomenal amount of the Bible to memory. If one of the obligations of an heir is to remember the ancestral patriarchs' stories, then Philip Gosse fulfilled his filial duties and gained the blessing. Yet Edmund, like Esau, was cast outside the family circle because he rejected his Father's stories. Philip "could not help thinking that I was naughty, and would not learn the chapters, until at last he gave up the effort" (F&S 48).

The only textual inheritance that Edmund is willing to swallow is a poetic one. When his father decided to teach him Latin, "out of this strength there came an unexpected



sudden sweetness" (F&S 143). Philip quoted some verses from Virgil and a "miracle" was revealed to Edmund, "the incalculable, the amazing beauty which could exist in the sound of verses" (144). The son then

persuaded my Father, who was a little astonished at my insistence, to repeat the lines over and over again. At last my brain caught them, and as I walked in Benny's garden, or as I hung over the tidal pools at the edge of the sea, all my inner being used to ring out with the sound of Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas (144).

Edmund's capacity to memorize texts is awakened when he hears something that appeals to his sense of beauty. No longer adopting "the curious density" that a child affects "in order to avoid receiving impressions--blankly, dumbly, achieving by stupidity what they cannot achieve by argument" (150), Edmund willingly learned poetry where he had rejected scripture. He actually asks his father to repeat the verses, where before he was asked to repeat Biblical verses and refused.

Despite Edmund's attempts to escape from the scriptures into literature, his conversion to poetry is couched in typological language, strength and sweetness referring to Samson's riddle of the lion in Judges 14:14. Here, passages from Virgil descend from the lips of the father as if he is inspired by the spirit of the Lord (Judges 14:6). For Edmund, poetic experience cannot be interpreted outside of a religious hermeneutic circle, and it is appropriate that he alludes to a mysterious and symbolic Bible verse when he tells the story of his personal poetic epiphany.

Samson partook of the lion's honey just as Edmund drew strength from the magic of poetry. Yet Samson plays a role

in the Great Scheme of typology that seems inimical to a modern story about the assertion of individuality. For Samson, like his spiritual descendant Samuel<sup>16</sup>, and by extension, Edmund, is a nazirite (Judges 13:5). Samson, Samuel, and Edmund are consecrated to God in infancy. Moreover, it is typological expectations like the ones which define the lives of Samson and Samuel which constitute the main diet of Gosse's religious education. The scriptures are almost literally "fed" to him, in an attempt to make him internalize them completely and "learn them by heart". Edmund becomes scripturally-saturated by the time he reaches young adulthood:

the facts and doctrines contained in the Bible . . . had been presented to me so often and had sunken into me so far that . . . they 'lay bedridden in the dormitory of the soul', and made no impression of any kind upon me (F&S 241).

At times typological literature produced real symptoms of sickness, especially on Sundays: "The Plymouth Brother theology which alone was open to me produced, at length, and particularly on hot afternoons, a faint physical nausea, a kind of secret headache" (F&S 197). Gosse's nausea signalled that he had become over-stuffed with typology and he took a dose of the graveyard poets to try and counteract the former's debilitating effects. So also, Philip's letters of exhortation to Edmund in his new London home "would lie awaiting me, destroying the taste of the bacon, reducing the flavour of the tea to insipidity" (237). Anna Shipton once dreamed that Emily fed the fruit of the Gospel to her son, but the typological expectations of Edmund's boyhood only served to make him sick.

## VI.ii. Edmund's Defences against His Typological Education.

What were some of the methods Gosse used to keep the scriptures from invading his system? One method, mentioned above, was to play dumb. Gosse claims that he "desired to appreciate but could never get my teeth into" works on theology,

over which my eye and tongue learned to slip without penetrating, so that I would read, and read aloud, and with great propriety of emphasis, page after page without having formed an idea or retained an expression. There was, for instance, a writer on prophecy called Jukes . . . and I was early set to read Jukes aloud to them. I did it glibly, like a machine, but the sight of Jukes' volumes became an abomination to me, and I never formed the outline of a notion what they were about (F&S 50).

The passive resistance Gosse offers could be read in sexual as well as gastronomical terms. Here, he commits the sin of Onan--slipping without penetrating--in order to avoid intimate contact with Jukes. Later critics of Gosse's writings would complain about the premature ejaculations of his intellect and his inability to engage with literary texts in a profound way. He was not willing to penetrate deeply into the literature he studied, perhaps because he was afraid of what he would find there (Intro. to F&S 15). His status as "light-weight" critic was founded upon fear instead of lack of intelligence or talent.

Gosse supplemented peaceful typological disobedience with more active strategies. In order to fight typology from within, Edmund bargains with his captors. For instance, when he stays with his mother in the Pimlico sickroom, negotiations over what he will read to her take the form of

a gentle power struggle between mother and son over whether to read typological literature or hymns. Gosse recounts how they passed the time:

I read the Bible every day, and at much length; also,--with I cannot but think some praiseworthy patience,--a book of incommunicable dreariness, called Newton's Thoughts on the Apocalypse. Newton bore a great resemblance to my old aversion, Jukes, and I made a sort of playful compact with my Mother that if I read aloud a certain number of pages out of Thoughts on the Apocalypse, as a reward I should be allowed to recite 'my own favourite hymns' (F&S 73).

The compact may have been playful, but the mere fact that Emily is open to textual negotiation suggests that significant gaps and spaces were left open for her son to read independently. A person who can bargain is a person who has a measure of power. In this case, the weapon at hand was religious music; here, Gosse's love of poetry can be seen as something that was nurtured from within the approved theological tradition. Hymns offered a legitimate alternative to typology and provided Edmund with a measure of individual assertion and possession: my own favourite hymns. Yet the verses from the hymns were applied tropologically, as exemplified in the way in which Emily comforted herself by repeating the lines from Toplady's hymn: "Nor wilt Thou relinquish at last/A sinner so signally lov'd" (F&S 74). As Edmund was not old enough to write his way out of the Puritan tradition, he can only rebel against it by differing from his parents over what texts he should read.

The son is careful to distinguish his musical and poetic preferences from those of Emily and Philip. He tells us

that "My Father . . . had some knowledge of the principles of vocal music, although not, I am afraid, much taste" (F&S 91). Philip believed that "religious truth could be sucked in, like mother's milk, from hymns which were godly and sound, and yet correctly versified" (91). Yet Edmund does not share his tastes, and he describes how

my spirit had rebelled against some of these hymns, especially those written--a mighty multitude--by Horatius Bonar; naughtily refusing to read Bonar's 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' to my Mother in our Pimlico lodgings. A secret hostility to this particular form of effusion was already, at the age of seven, beginning to define itself in my brain, side by side with an unctuous infantile conformity (91).

Edmund tries to define himself away from his parents by differing from them on aesthetic grounds. Father and Son is the ultimate expression of this rebellion.

#### VI.iii. Typological Reversals.

As we have seen, Edmund devised several strategies, many of them outwardly passive, in which he could prevent the scriptures from "getting to him". A bolder technique consisted of twisting typology around to serve Edmund's interpretive ends, a process which typology itself encourages in relation to the Hebrew scriptures. Henderson's chapter on Father and Son in The Victorian Self examines the concept of "negative typology", observing that "throughout the book Gosse deliberately "misuses" typology in order to make a point about its stifling effect on his own life" (120). Disagreeing with Linda Peterson's evaluation of Gosse's typological method as "unsystematic",

Henderson argues "that in Father and Son Gosse creates a sustained and coherent pattern of typological reversals" (120). These reversals are achieved through Edmund's identification with the anti-heroes of the Bible: the wicked, the idol-worshippers, the greedy. Just as the Romantics preferred outcast figures like Cain and Ishmael, so Gosse came to associate himself with the bad guys of the Bible.

Yet Henderson perceives the limited effectiveness of Edmund's typological perversions:

although one might suspect that Gosse is merely trying to discredit the religious system that bound him, in fact his self-definition, both positive and negative, depends upon it. For these typological inversions point to the entire process of discovering self-identity through negation--Gosse finds out who he is by learning who he is not (127).

It is true that Gosse used typology to help fashion his identity, but I think his motivations for undermining the typological tradition from within are darker and more Judas-like (and they include a desire to "hatefully" parody the father). For instance, Gosse compares himself to the servant of Elisha, Gehazi, when he tells the story of how his father denied him the opportunity of a career in banking (F&S 214). In 2 Kings 5:16, Elisha would not accept a gift from Naaman for healing his leprosy, but:

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him (2 Kings 5:20).

Like Judas, Gehazi deceives someone who trusts him in order to promote his own material gain<sup>17</sup>.

Henderson evaluates the Gehazi/Judas allusion in terms of the roles the father and son play:

Thus Gosse plays the materialistic Gehazi to his father's unworldly but self-righteous Elisha. Over and over again Gosse uses typology to undermine the conventional patterns. Subtly, he turns his father's own weapon against him (126).

Here, Henderson admits that the typological struggle is a violent one. Gosse "undermines" typological convention by stealing his father's conventional weapons.

In the Epilogue to Father and Son, Philip suffers like Job because his son is not living up to his "dedication"<sup>18</sup>. He writes to Edmund:

'Holy Job suspected that his sons might have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. Was not his suspicion much like mine, grounded on the same reasons and productive of the same results? For it drove him to God in intercession'. . . . In fact, Holy Job continued to be frequently looked at, and for this Patriarch I came to experience a hatred which was as venomous as it was undeserved. But what youth of eighteen would willingly be compared with the sons of Job? And indeed, for my part, I felt much more like that justly exasperated character, Elihu the Buzite (243)<sup>19</sup>.

When Edmund "sinned" against his dedication, Philip Gosse looked to the book of Job for comfort and instruction, hoping that Holy Job could provide him with a theodicy. The father fancied that he could recapture the prodigal by entrapping him in the text of Job, just as he hoped that self-projection into the patriarch's situation might magically restore the son he lost.

But Edmund is not willing be thus identified as a lost sheep. He uses typology as a screen to mask his hatred for Holy Philip, and he appropriates to himself the right to choose which character from the book of Job he will be. By

getting on the "wrong side" of typology, Gosse chooses to keep company with Biblical losers like Esau, Gehazi, and Ahab (F&S 244).

Henderson discusses the importance of Edmund's act of chair worship, arguing that "he shows himself allied not with Moses, but with the worshippers of the Golden Calf" (125). Another "type" of idolatrous situation for which Father and Son constructs a nineteenth-century antitype is that of Naaman's bowing in the house of Rimmon (2 Kings 5:18). Rimmon is the Assyrian divinity<sup>20</sup> that Naaman's master, the king of Aram worships, and the first Naaman figure to appear in Father and Son is Miss Marks, the housekeeper who arrived after Emily's death. Miss Marks' intelligence was

prepared to swallow, at one mouthful, whatever my Father presented to it. . . . She soon bowed . . . very contentedly in the House of Rimmon, learning to repeat, with marked fluency, the customary formulas and shibboleths (F&S 97).

Replacing the chair as wooden idol, Philip Gosse becomes the false God to which his hypocritical subjects bow, and his house becomes the House of Rimmon. The son himself admits that as a young child he made an idol of his father: "I confused him in some sense with God" (F&S 56)<sup>21</sup>. Miss Marks seems to have made the same mistake, and her conformity to household orthodoxy serves as a comment on Edmund's own fluency (and insincerity) in outwardly appearing to accept the "false" religious formulas of his father. Like Edmund, Miss Marks is extremely imitative.



The connection between Naaman and Edmund is made more explicit on two other occasions. When he was sixteen, Edmund was

still but a bird fluttering in the net-work of my Father's will . . . I resigned all thought of attending any other services than those at our 'Room', but I did no longer regard this exclusion as a final one. I bowed, but it was in the house of Rimmon, from which I now knew that I must inevitably escape (F&S 232).

And when it became evident that he could no longer fulfil the religious expectations of his father, Gosse found hypocrisy to be a necessary evil which served to keep Philip's theological probings at bay: "It led, alas! to a great deal of bowing in the house of Rimmon, to much hypocritical ingenuity in drawing my Father's attention away, if possible, as the terrible subject was seen to be looming and approaching" (F&S 246). Edmund's subterfuge was perceived to be inevitable but not everlasting. For Gosse, the religion of the Plymouth Brethren, and by extension the most cherished beliefs of his father, became as false a religion to him as the Assyrian one was to Elisha.

Edmund turns typology against itself by refusing to read it on its own terms. He does not direct his sympathies towards the prescribed targets, as he finds Job exasperating and Elisha a good-time spoiler. Furthermore, Gosse appropriates the negative judgements that Christian scripture directs against its Jewish "enemies" and turns them in upon Puritan Christianity itself. For instance, he interprets the religious constraints which he experienced as a young Plymouth Brother in terms of "bondage to the Law and the Prophets" (F&S 171). Ironically, this ability to make

scriptural language undermine itself (using its own terms) is essentially a typological skill. Some of the writers of the New Testament--especially Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews--did exactly the same thing to the Jewish tradition. Christianity's casuistical masterstroke was its appropriation of the Israelite's birthright, making the Old Testament discredit itself. This was accomplished by ransacking it for evidence to support the claim that Christians were somehow more natural and true descendants of Abraham than the actual descendants themselves.

For example, in Galatians 4, the story of Sarah and Hagar is appropriated and reinterpreted in favour of the Christian dispensation:

But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. . . . But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all (Galatians 4:23-24, 26).

Here, Hebrew scripture is coerced into undermining its own legitimacy, an exploitation which is accomplished by shifting the slave-stigma back on to the very people who originally rejected it. Again, the elements which define the Israelites' inheritance--that they are not slaves they are not illegitimate--become the very elements that Christians claim for themselves. Paul turns Jews into their own worst enemies, projecting on to them everything they most wanted to deflect. Like Jacob, he is a master at cheating others out of their birthright.

Gosse follows Paul's lead when he commandeers scripture for his own purposes, redefining the Christian tradition in

terms which Paul would have applied to the Jewish, i.e. "bondage to the Law". Here, Gosse relies on a brand of typological hermeneutics which does not hesitate to interpret texts according to its own purposes. The "freedom" of typology--which can be both liberating and coercive--corresponds to Edmund's religious liberation at the end of the epilogue to Father and Son. He sees his father as representing the Old Testament and himself the New; Philip/Hagar represents bondage to the laws of religious dogma, Edmund/Sarah represents the freedom and possible antinomianism that the doctrine of grace implies. Edmund interprets Philip's readings of the Christian scriptures as a type of bondage that shadows forth the antitype of literary freedom. The slavery of Philip's Biblical Egypt foreshadows the promised land of poetry.

Edmund's nightmare about being bound like Mazeppa and galloping through space in spiralling circles (132) provided the symbolic expression of what it felt like to be trapped and imprisoned by the tremendous pressures of his "Old Testament" dedication. These religious expectations made him feel

like a small and solitary bird, caught and hung out hopelessly and endlessly in a glittering cage . . . I saw myself imprisoned for ever in the religious system which had caught me and would whirl my helpless spirit as in the concentric wheels of my nightly vision (F&S 167-168).

The concentric wheels could represent the circularity of typology, illustrating the way it lassoes an individual and inserts him into a pattern of history that is endlessly repetitive of Biblical history. Gosse is yoked and

harnessed to a mode of thinking and living which forces him to exist on a perpetual typological treadmill, continually propelling him backwards into the world of Samuel, Job, and Christ. Philip's "Biblical bearing-rein was incessantly busy, jerking into position the head of the dejected neophyte" (F&S 236), thus "hitching" his son up to a Biblical pugmill. Images which suggest the violent husbandry of Edmund's soul--yoke, burden, bearing-rein--go far to reinforce the notion of typology as a form of slavery or bondage, something which confirms the violence inherent in typology's etymology, i.e. striking and marks left by the blow.

#### VII. Edmund's Imitative Faculty.

By using the language of the Bible to undermine its own typological program, Gosse "reverses" typology's "standard terms so that the law and the prophets represent not salvation but captivity, and the familiar bugbears of Evangelicalism, art and literature, represent not damnation but release" (Henderson 121). Yet before Gosse can turn to art and literature proper, he has first to develop his "imitative faculty" from within the theological world he found himself situated. In Henderson's words: "it is only by working through the terms of biblical typology that Gosse can define his own identity" (120). Imitation need not imply a dearth of creativity, because it can easily lead to subtle reworkings of the thing imitated, celebrating the copy while making the original redundant.

Edmund was an "imitative imp" as a child (F&S 70), who "rattled forth, parrot-fashion, the conventional phraseology of 'the saints' (F&S 84)<sup>22</sup>. Edmund's post-baptismal mental condition was also highly imitative:

I did very earnestly desire to follow where my Father led. That passion for imitation . . . was strongly developed at this time, and it induced me to repeat the language of pious books in godly ejaculations which greatly edified my grown-up companions (F&S 168).

The scene in Edmund's autobiography which most graphically illustrates the creative potential of imitation is the one which outlines the literary history of his monograph on sea-creatures. As Edmund's "tenth year advanced" (145) his character took an imitative turn:

The increased activity of my intellectual system now showed itself in what I believe to be a very healthy form, direct imitation. . . . In the secular direction, this now took the form of my preparing little monographs on seaside creatures, which were arranged, tabulated and divided as exactly as possible on the pattern of those which my Father was composing for his Actinologia Britannica (145-46).

Even though he copied his father and was "obliged incessantly to borrow sentences, word for word, from my Father's published books" (147), he nevertheless engaged in an artistic process of "arrangement"--setting things in order, tabulating, and selecting. These are the very activities that he claims are important for the biographer. They are also important for the typological practitioner, who borrows words from the Hebrew Scriptures and arranges them according to a Christian pattern. So also, Edmund makes the sea-creatures conform to an order of his own making, even though the form of his arrangement depends upon the work of the father.

Edmund's artistic arrangements imitate Philip's. The father arranged his son within a similar systematic narrative when he was born:

The event was thus recorded in my Father's diary: 'E. delivered of a son. Received green swallow from Jamaica. . . . what the wording exemplifies is my Father's extreme punctilio. The green swallow arrived later in the day than the son, and the earlier visitor was therefore recorded first; my Father was scrupulous in every species of arrangement (F&S 38, emphasis added).

The ability to record and arrange is shared by scientists, typologists, and artists alike. Edmund is barely out of the womb before his father begins to commit his life to narrative form.

However amateur in execution, the monographs that Edmund composes are an attempt to appropriate the role of "narrator" and author to himself. Philip did not entirely approve:

my Father, very indulgently and good-temperedly, deprecated these exercises of mine . . . they were, moreover, parodies, rather than imitations, of his writings, for I invented new species, with sapphire spots and crimson tentacles and amber bands, which were close enough to his real species to be disconcerting. He came from conscientiously shepherding the flocks of ocean, and I do not wonder that my ring-straked, speckled and spotted varieties put him out of countenance (F&S 147).

Just as there is a creative tension in typological thinking between literal and symbolic meaning, so also the imitative faculty can develop into subversive parody. What makes parody effective is its mimetic achievement--"close enough to be disconcerting".

The Biblical allusion in the sea-creature passage refers to the story of Jacob and Laban, and it offers a creative insight into the relationship between father and son.

Genesis 30:32 finds Jacob committing a sheep and goat scam, Jacob asking his father-in-law: "let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep . . . and the spotted and speckled among the goats" (NRSV). Philip Gosse is also a shepherd who is tricked by one who manipulates his "speckled and spotted varieties". Jacob is a trickster who specializes in stealing inheritances--first from his brother and then from Laban. As inheritance-stealer, Jacob is a type to Edmund's antitype. By parodying his father, Edmund appropriates his creative inheritance, but the means by which he gains it are subversive and "illegitimate". Here, imitation leads to the undermining of the thing imitated, echoing Edmund's unconscious mockery of his father's seascapes in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse (119).

Gosse also resembles New Testament writers like Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who steal the Jews' inheritance through a process of assimilation leading to rejection of the thing assimilated. Father and Son is a monograph written upon similar principles; it stands as a testimony to the artistic birthright that Edmund Gosse tried to "steal" from his parents. Yet the typological training he received was a "legitimate" gift which was nevertheless used to undermine the givers. In the sea-creature story, Edmund performs a typological reading of Genesis to his own advantage--imitating the typological practices of New Testament writers--just as he transforms and undermines his father's scientific artistry by parodying it.

#### VIII. Edmund's Literary Defences.

We have looked at how typology can be abused by its own "children". Edmund tried to undermine typology from within its own interpretive parameters, but he also relied on outside resources to bolster his inner defences against the theological training he received. Poetry served as a means of putting distance between Edmund and the Bible, and it ultimately came to replace the need for scripture altogether. Literature assisted the son's struggle to arrange and "fashion" an identity he could accept; and one of its main functions was to help him distinguish himself from his parents. In chapter five, we saw how the funeral poets offered Edmund a possible alternative self which he eventually realized in his role as biographer. It is significant that these gloomy poets were chosen over "nauseating" works of Brethren theology such as "Jukes' On the Pentateuch or . . . a perfectly excruciating work ambiguously styled The Javelin of Phineas" (F&S 197). The choice of poetry over theology echoes Edmund's preference for hymns over Newton in the Pimlico era, yet as he grew older, his reading-choices became more daring.

The first book of fiction Edmund ever read was Michael Scott's Tom Cringle's Log (serialized 1829-33). Philip presented the novel to his son as an educational tool to help him learn the geography of the West Indies, but Edmund used it instead as secret ally in his fight for independence:

the reading and re-reading of Tom Cringle's Log did more than anything else, in this critical eleventh



year of my life, to give fortitude to my individuality, which was in great danger--as I now see--of succumbing to the pressure my Father brought to bear upon it from all sides (F&S 171-72).

Edmund marshalled an army of poets to further reinforce his reading-power. The more secular works he could read, the less chance the Bible would have of ensnaring him within its pages, and the number of poets encountered by Edmund increases exponentially as Father and Son draws to its close: Shakespeare, Coleridge, Jonson, Marlowe, and Shelley, to name a few. Poetry and literature sang a siren's song which "tempted me to stray up innumerable paths which meandered in directions at right angles to that direct strait way which leadeth to salvation" (F&S 223). Gosse becomes an anti-pilgrim, wandering from the path of Christianity in search of Beauty.

In addition to works of literature, the pagan gods offered another sanctuary from the "killing truth" of Christianity. As mentioned in chapter four, Philip Dodd describes the conflict between "Jesus and Pan" (F&S 233) in his article "The Nature of Edmund Gosse's Father and Son". Dodd places this conflict in the context of Matthew Arnold's binary opposition between Hebraism and Hellenism (Dodd 271), pointing out that Gosse utilizes this intellectual model in some of his biographies (270). Yet Gosse portrays Arnold's cultural dichotomy to the disadvantage of Christianity, for he believed Puritans to be the enemies of literature.

Edmund's "refined" stepmother was the first person to introduce him to the gods: "My mother . . . received from her earlier home certain volumes, among which was a gaudy

gift-book . . . containing a few steel engravings of statues./These attracted me violently" (F&S 204). The pictures of the Greek gods provided an early foundation for Gosse's aesthetic philosophy:

I reflected that they were too beautiful to be so wicked as my Father thought they were. The dangerous and pagan notion that beauty palliates evil budded in my mind, without any external suggestion, and by this reflection alone I was still further sundered from the faith in which I had been trained (F&S 205).

Brought up in a tradition which teaches believers to be suspicious of beauty, Gosse reacted against it and went to the opposite extreme--evincing a blind faith in the connection between beauty and goodness. Here, one can see the first glimmerings of a belief in art for art's sake, making Gosse's later attraction to the Pre-Raphaelites unsurprising.

In his introduction to the Penguin edition of Father and Son, Abbs criticizes Gosse for his irresponsible attitude to literature:

The weakness of Gosse lay in his aestheticism . . . But this hedonistic approach to literature floundered badly as civilization encountered the irrational slaughter of the First World War. . . . In the changing conditions, Edmund Gosse's lightness of touch became not so much sensitivity as a lack of pressure; the super-refinement . . . became a mode of superficiality (15-16).

If Philip erred because he exerted too much moral "pressure", then his son failed through his unwillingness to assert any at all. Edmund rejected his parents' Protestant indifference to forms (F&S 53) and became an aesthete who valued form over content, style over moral message. In this sense, he is the personification of Wilde's ironic remark:

"Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style (Wilde 981).

#### IX. Edmund's Self-Fashioning.

From reading rebellions, to typological inversions, to imitation, to aestheticism, Gosse progressed at last to the sin of storytelling when he wrote Father and Son. He situates himself inside his mother's sin in order to try and free himself from it. Yet in doing so, he fails to deviate from her own acts of literary sinning in any significant way. After all, it was story-telling which provided her with the consciousness of self, through revealing her essential wickedness. As Emily's 1835 "Recollections" and Bunyan's Grace Abounding exemplify, a sense of sin is a necessary precondition for autobiography, just as Edmund's typological education was a necessary precondition for the writing of Father and Son.

For Edmund, the writing (and reading) of biographical and autobiographical fiction became a means of subverting typological expectations. He wrote the lives of others and himself in order to escape being written by Samuel. He was a passive, imitative child who became an active artist--reserving the right to identify with the losers and outcasts in the Bible and to make the Samuels and Christs redundant. By casting out the Biblical type and assuming the self-sufficient role of antitype, Gosse tries to preserve his self from being invaded by an all-powerful text. Thus Edmund's desire to "fashion his inner life for himself" (F&S

251) is his greatest assertion of creative power. Gone is the Samuel facsimile, as Gosse throws off his yoke and tries to step out of the pages of the Bible<sup>23</sup>.

The art of self-fashioning is the art of lying. If lying is a necessary step in the development of a child's awareness of himself as a "me"<sup>24</sup>, then Gosse's early lie about spoiling the garden rockery coupled with his discovery that his father was not omniscient (F&S 56-57), serve as formative experiences that attest to the power of falsehood to strengthen inner integrity and independence. In his essay "Credence and Credibility" in Approaches to Victorian Autobiography (1979), Howard Helsingier asserts that "[the] discovery of untruth was the central event in Gosse's mental history" (Helsingier 58).

Edmund abrogates to himself the authority of a liar at the end of Father and Son<sup>25</sup>, as he comes to understand that lying is necessary for the creation of an emancipated self. When Edmund left home to settle in London, his father presented him with "a copy of Dean Alford's edition of the Greek New Testament, in four great volumes . . . so magnificently bound in full morocco that the work shone on my poor shelf of sixpenny poets like a duchess among dairymaids" (F&S 240). Philip continued to try and overpower his son with the Word, dwarfing his budding poetic propensities with the imposing volumes of the Bible. The "Biblical bearing-rein" (236) was further employed when Philip "extracted from me a written promise that I would translate and meditate upon a portion of the Greek text

every morning before I started for business. This promise I presently failed to keep" (240). Edmund

concealed the dereliction from him, and the sense that I was deceiving my Father ate into my conscience like a canker. But the dilemma was now before me that I must either deceive my Father in such things or paralyse my own character (F&S 241).

The choice is between fulfilling typological promises or fulfilling one's individual promise as an artist and independent son.

Though the event occurred at a later date than Father and Son suggests, Edmund, as a young adult, finally "threw off once for all the yoke of his 'dedication', and, as respectfully as he could . . . he took a human being's privilege to fashion his inner life for himself" (F&S 251). Although Father and Son is narrated in the first person throughout, the book ends in the third person, with Gosse referring to himself as "a thoughtful and honest young man" (251). Distancing himself from the "I" of the book through "lying", he creates a character who vanquishes his Biblical and parental enemies with noble and heroic style. Here, Edmund resembles the hero of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in that he reads his liberation in terms of the artistic framework of "fashioning" and forging. Helsinger remarks that "Gosse, like Dedalus, has become an artificer, because the inner self is no longer considered a scientific fact but is recognized as an imaginative creation" (62). As autobiographer and biographer, Gosse engages in the process of composing, selecting, and fashioning the raw material of his life and that of others. The author of Father and Son can speak of "fashioning" his inner life because the self has become something discovered, revealed, or

created by the autobiographer. . . . Gosse's defense of lying is really therefore a defense of style; a defense of language as the instrument of self-creation, self-discovery, and self-preservation (Helsingier 62-63).

In order to prevent his life from being fashioned by the book of Samuel and his parents, Gosse must deceive and conceal and lie his way into the construction of an alternative self--a writer who refuses to be censored by the typological powers that be. Yet the irony is that Gosse's "fashioned" self depends upon the typological training he received; his parents' brand of typology taught him to read texts and people authoritatively, even if that authority meant "lying" about the subjects under interpretation. Here, typology encourages the decisive shaping of self--something which Emily deployed in relation to her son's identity--and Edmund engages in this same coercive shaping in order to create an artistic version of himself. He tries to make typology work for him by applying its interpretive license to himself--demanding the freedom to censor and suppress the Samuel narrative and thus liberate himself from its bondage.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the 1870's The Academy had the reputation of being "radical". As Thwaite records, one of Philip Gosse's neighbors, Dr. Finch gave "a visible start when, with a father's pride, P.H. Gosse had told him Edmund was writing in the Academy. 'The Academy?' he exclaimed, 'that's rather a heretical paper, isn't it?'" (Thwaite 129). After the turn of the century, the paper's "heretical" stance is maintained when it expresses its tolerance for Edmund's filial rebellion in Father and Son.

<sup>2</sup> The London Mercury's characterization of Father and Son as a "series of vignettes" could be taken as a criticism of Gosse's narrative technique, which sometimes has a tendency to digress and lose track of chronological sequence.

<sup>3</sup> Emily forces a Christian interpretation on I Samuel: "Does not the Christian mother's heart glow with hope and joy, when she thinks of Hannah and Samuel, the very types of . . . early training resulting in early conversion . . . ?" (A&C 154).

<sup>4</sup> Emily's "Recollections" describe her ambivalent response to being "entrapped" by her friends into going to the theatre: "I would always have preferred staying away, but had not courage to offend them, and felt not sure of the unlawfulness of going, and knew not what excuse to make" (29).

<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the Exclusive Brethren, the Open Brethren, the branch to which the Gosses belonged, did not believe in infant baptism. See Roy Coad's A History of the Brethren Movement (123-124). That the Gosses took an interest in the conflict between "Darbyites" and Open Brethren is evidenced in a letter from Edmund to Philip dated October 24, 1871, in which Edmund is "grieved to say" that Emily's old friend, Aunt Lucy "is now a Darbyite" (CUL Manuscript Room, letter #47 in Letters Father and Son).

<sup>6</sup> This mirrors how repetition serves as catharsis in the psychoanalytic model.

<sup>7</sup> In his desire to hear the Gospel message fall from his son's lips, Philip tries to force Edmund into the role of a theologian: "He is bound to have those words of Scripture, which never can be his own words, for ever on his lips" (JT 212).

<sup>8</sup> These favorites include: "Milton . . . Wordsworth, Gray, Cowper, and Southey, were at his fingers' ends" as well as "portions of Swinburne and Rossetti" (The Life of PHG 351). Edmund's "lie" lends support to the notion that the father in the Life is a creative and poetic figure in contrast to the father in Father and Son, who is literal, philistine, and Biblical.

<sup>9</sup> Abbs' source is Charteris' The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse: Gosse's "brother critics had all the sense of a high calling common to the Victorians, but lacked the Victorian solidity. If the reaction to a literary work was pleasure, they had an adequate basis for criticism without any sizing-up of moral values" (444).

<sup>10</sup> Yet Philip was not as zealous an enemy of all fiction as his first wife was (F&S 170).

<sup>11</sup> See A Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse (54-55).

<sup>12</sup> Edmund also contradicts the "philistine" father-portrait in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.

<sup>13</sup> This phrase comes from Coventry Patmore (178).

<sup>14</sup> This foreshadows Edmund's later perception of his father's theology as representing "bondage to the Law" (F&S 171).

<sup>15</sup> However, it has to be admitted that a child cannot always be judged by the same standards as an adult.

<sup>16</sup> See Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg's I and II Samuel: A Commentary (1964).

<sup>17</sup> The Gehazi type appears in Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress when Christian denounces Demas: "I know you, Gehazi was your Great Grand-father, and Judas your Father . . ." (108).

<sup>18</sup> Here, Philip takes his cue from Emily's Abraham and His Children, which praises Job's "lovely example": "even after his sons and his daughters were grown up, and living in houses of their own, still watching over them, rising up every morning to intercede for them, lest they may unknown to him have committed sin" (241).

<sup>19</sup> Although she was not "exasperated", Anna Shipton also played Elihu to Emily's Job in Tell Jesus! (30).

<sup>20</sup> See Peter Abbs' note #13 (F&S 258-259).

<sup>21</sup> In doing so, Edmund supports Freud's theory that religion is a projection of humankind's ambivalent feelings about the human father.

<sup>22</sup> George C. Williamson's "Edmund Gosse as a Boy: A Reminiscence" in The London Mercury of October 1928 records some of these parrot-like phrases and questions: "I at once led the way to the garden, eager to show Gosse a much loved toad and a very tame grass snake that were hidden away in the corner of a glass-house, but how well I remember his stopping me with the imperative question as he pointed to my grandfather, "Is he a believer? . . . to play with Edmund



Gosse was, I found, impossible. "Did my grandfather have Family Prayers?" "Did he read his Bible?" "Did he ever allow novels to come into the house?". . . . "Did I ever do anything or go anywhere without prayer?". . . . "Why," I was asked, "did I play with God's creatures, why not admire the perfection of their creation?" (633-634).

<sup>2 3</sup> Edmund's attempt to liberate himself from the pages of the Bible parallels his early magical practices: "I persuaded myself that, if I could only discover the proper words to say or the proper passes to make, I could induce the gorgeous birds and butterflies in my Father's illustrated manuals to come to life, and fly out of the book, leaving holes behind them" (F&S 60).

<sup>2 4</sup> Tropological thinking tries to undermine this awareness by conflating a Biblical "he" with a personal "me".

<sup>2 5</sup> This is in opposition to the authority of truth-sayer which he claims to possess in the preface to Father and Son.

## Conclusion

### I.i The Epilogue to "Father and Son".

The conclusion of this thesis will consider in closer detail Edmund Gosse's concluding Epilogue to Father and Son, where the conflict between father and son culminates in open filial rebellion. The two sections which follow the epilogue discussion will offer a brief comparative study of the autobiographies of Samuel Butler and William Hale White. Gosse, Butler, and White all employ typology and tropology for literary and secular purposes, "re-writing" the scriptures in order to transcend the religious expectations of their childhood. They commit the sin of storytelling in order to redeem themselves from the proposed purity and orthodoxy of their early "dedications". But in order to do so, they must rely upon the typological and tropological training that accompanied dedication to a specific, mostly Evangelical, religious tradition. They adopt both the authority and the interpretive license of a typological practitioner to help them define their lives on their own terms.

In the epilogue to Father and Son, Gosse casts himself into his final typological role as unsatisfactory prodigal--the boy who comes home only to reject his father's faith and become a "sinful" poet. Instead of the sinner who repents and asks for forgiveness, Edmund is the "child of many prayers" who liberates himself from his dedication to the Lord by repenting of the "theatrical" (F&S 235) faith it

engendered. Ironically, he gives up the dramatic artistry of his father's faith in order to become an artist.

The epilogue begins with a profession of good faith towards the father and the stated desire to close the book with the "unique and noble" Father in the foreground (F&S 236). Despite the removal of the dedicated child to London (where he worked as a clerk in the British Museum), the epilogue continues the story of the now relatively long-distance relationship between father and son: "In relation to the Son . . . the attitude of the Father continued to be one of extreme solicitude, deepening by degrees into disappointment and disenchantment" (F&S 236). Faced with the possibility of losing control over Edmund's soul, Philip began the "torment of a postal inquisition" (236). All the letters insisted, "with every variety of appeal, on a reiterated declaration that I still fully intended, as in the days of my earliest childhood, 'to be on the Lord's side' in everything" (237). From Edmund's point of view, the correspondence became a form of "bondage" which rivalled the dedication itself; indeed, it became the avenging textual incarnation of Edmund's dedication.

Philip sensed the dangers that London posed to a young man's faith and declared that the "great panacea" to the threat of doubt was "the study of the Bible, and this my Father never ceased to urge upon me" (240). Yet Edmund was becoming restless and bored under the regime of constant study of the scriptures:

My growing distaste for the Holy Scriptures began to occupy my thoughts, and to surprise as much as it scandalized me. My desire was to continue to delight in those sacred pages, for which I still had an

instinctive veneration. Yet I could not but observe the difference between the zeal with which I snatched at a volume of Carlyle or Ruskin . . . and the increasing languor with which I took up Alford for my daily 'passage' (F&S 241).

Philip tried to effect a double "binding" process, flanking his son with letters on the one hand and the authority of the scriptures on the other. Surrounded on all sides, the son saw himself as a "hapless correspondent, who was now 'snared' indeed, limed by the pen like a bird by the feet, and could not by any means escape" (F&S 242). Bondage to his father's letters becomes a continuation of his enforced "bondage to the Law" (171), and Edmund reads "Christian" liberation in terms of the lawlessness of literature. He sought refuge and escape in the words of Carlyle and Ruskin, in an attempt to construct an aesthetic and literary identity in opposition to the Samuel type. Moreover, as described in chapter six, he came to "experience a hatred" for Holy Job, to whom Philip compared himself, thus forcing his son into the role of Job's potentially rebellious sons.

The combined pressures of existing typological expectations reinforced by letters and personal "inquisitions" when Edmund returned home on holidays led up to the scene in the hothouse, where the son "demanded the right to think for myself" (F&S 249). Here, as in his early chair-worshipping days, Edmund sets himself up as a heretic in distinction to his father as inquisitor and intercessor (after Job and Christ). The son overturns his role as servant of the Lord, and transforms it into that of a Judas who is "fugitive" from His wrath:

I had scarcely arrived in London before the following letter, furiously despatched in the track of the fugitive, buried itself like an arrow in my heart: 'When your sainted Mother died, she not only tenderly committed you to God, but left you also as a solemn charge to me, to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' (249).

The letter continues, lamenting the extent to which Edmund has "departed from God". The discovery of the son's backsliding was a "heavy blow", but what was worse:

Nothing seemed left to which I could appeal. We had, I found, no common ground. The Holy Scriptures had no longer any authority . . . even the very character of God you weighed in your balance of fallen reason, and fashioned it accordingly. You were thus sailing down the rapid tide of time towards Eternity, without a single authoritative guide (having cast your chart overboard), except what you might fashion and forge on your own anvil . . . (F&S 250).

For Edmund, the preceding letter "sums up, with the closer logic, the whole history of the situation, and I may leave it to form the epigraph of this little book" (251). Yet the son continues the narrative for three more paragraphs after closing the quotation from the Father's letter of reproach. And he ends Father and Son with a declaration of independence that champions "a human being's privilege to fashion his inner life for himself" (251). Hence, as Peter Abbs observes in the introduction to Father and Son, Edmund's stated intention to use the epilogue as a vehicle to illuminate the "unique and noble figure of the Father" (236) is contradicted:

the Epilogue concentrates on the son's response and ends triumphantly with his manifesto of emancipation . . . . The manifest intention of the work is to end with the Victorian panegyric to the eminent patriarch: unique and noble. At this critical and falsifying moment in the book I suggest that the unconscious thrust of the whole volume broke through the surface and made itself dramatically visible. The deeper purpose of the book was to justify the son's act of freedom (29).

Yet how far was his "act of freedom" as dramatic and heroically independent as Edmund makes it out to be in the final paragraph of Father and Son? Ironically, he borrows his father's verb "to fashion", in order to describe his escape from Philip's own parental and typological fashionings. Philip evoked a Blakian creator God in his letter--fashioning and forging on his anvil--and once again, the "literary" expression of the son's liberation must always be subsumed under a framework defined by the father. Even though Edmund tries to have the "last word", Philip's poetic words sneak into his narrative regardless--summing up the plot of Father and Son with "closer logic" and comparable artistry. This is in keeping with the entire project of Father and Son, which owes its success to the typological and literary training with which his parents provided him.

I.ii. Beyond "Father and Son": Poetry and the Decay of Lying.

In the concluding pages of chapter six, we saw that forging and fashioning can include the art of lying. Not only does Edmund try to lie in the "artistic" sense of creating fiction, but he also lies in the ordinary moral sense of the word. Thwaite's biography reveals that Edmund "threw off his yoke" at a later stage than Father and Son indicates; the confrontation in the greenhouse in the summer of 1869 did not settle the issue once and for all. The protagonist was twenty (not twenty-one, as Father and Son records) when he defied his father, but

Edmund went on, for many years after leaving home, for far longer than he suggests in Father and Son, trying to work out his own form of belief. He did not really want, as he suggests in Father and Son, 'to be a godless child'. In fact he longed to believe and accept (Thwaite 66).

Edmund suppresses the letters that his father wrote to him immediately after the greenhouse rebellion. In a letter dated 4th August 1869 Philip wrote:

I know you love me, but do you love God? I think of your dying Mother's prayers; of your early promise; of my joy and thankfulness when you avouched the Lord to be your Saviour; and I want to know what of this remains (Thwaite 76-77).

The letter which Edmund classifies as an epigraph to Father and Son was "actually dated 21st January 1870, months after he had returned to London" (77). Moreover, Philip's "threatening" letters "continued for another three or four years" (77).

Thwaite exposes some of the inherent deceptions in Edmund's autobiography, one of which is the fiction that his "yoke" was cast off for good at age twenty. Thus, the conclusion to Edmund's book is rendered much more decisive and final than his "real life" attempt to free himself from the bondage of his early dedication and training. Edmund Gosse: a Literary Landscape revises the story of the epilogue to Father and Son:

Edmund's account of the struggle between two temperaments suggests . . . that at twenty (his birthday was in September 1869), the boy chose his own path and threw off once and for all the yoke of his 'dedication'. But in fact . . . the struggle went on for years, and the young man continued to work for his heavenly father (those long years still to come in the Brook Street Sunday School, for instance) and to try to please his earthly one (77).

Edmund is braver in "fiction" than he is in reality, creating a retrospective ending to the struggle between father and son that seems to be the product of fantasy. The fantasy of "patricide" undermines Edmund's claims in the preface to Father and Son that "the following narrative . . . is scrupulously true" (33).

It could be said that the anti-dedication that concludes the epilogue to the 1907 autobiography is Edmund's last great imitation of his father--fashioning and forging on his anvil. At the end of the book, Edmund creates himself in the image of the powerful Apollo figure of the father as well as the lonely yet independent poet that wrote Omphalos and The Romance of Natural History. Here, he learns how to lie from his father, and thus Edmund is a failed example of Wilde's ideal liar in "The Decay of Lying", who "starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration which, if nurtured



in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something really great and wonderful" (Wilde 973). Edmund's problem was that he could not surpass the excellence of his father's model. The Biblical training he received was more "congenial and sympathetic" to lying than he realized, and Philip's role as gifted typological "liar" remained uncontested. Thus, the decay of lying occurs in the second generation.

Edmund tried to construct a poetic identity for himself in opposition to the Samuel expectation, but even poetry offers no escape from the influence of Philip Gosse. The irony is that the "philistine" Puritan acts as ultimate judge of the potential "pagan's" literary efforts. After Edmund left home for London to earn a living and continue the task of educating himself to be poet, father and son discussed poetry via the post. Thwaite writes:

A very large proportion of the words between father and son dealt in fact not with religion but with literature, and in particular with poetry. At times, Edmund saw poetry as part of the path away from his father. . . . But, in fact, Philip shared his passion for poetry (67).

This passion is attested to in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, a book which paints a "poetic" father portrait that contradicts the narrow and unimaginative father presented in Father and Son.

In August 1869, soon after the incidents which mark the conclusion of Father and Son, Edmund and his friend John Blaikie, decided to try and prove themselves as poets and publish a book together. It is as if the manifestation of

Edmund's inner liberation must take material, textual form for it to be permanent and tangible. His "letters" are to counteract his father's letters (indeed, Edmund becomes a "man of letters"). But the book could not be published without financial help from Philip Gosse (Thwaite 83). Thwaite describes the strict authority he asserted over the enterprise:

Philip finally agreed to back them but took over the whole thing. He negotiated with Longmans for them. . . he subjected the enterprise to a typical minute scrutiny. John Blaikie is at first amazed. Is he really going to go 'through our poetics pronouncing what are and what are not publishable?' (84).

Edmund responded with irony and humor, writing to Blaikie on May 6th 1870: "The Critic of the West has raised his oracular voice and great is the fluttering among the doves. I send you your share of whipping, you get off better than I do . . ." (Thwaite 84). Philip's criticism was exhaustive and precise. For instance, he protests to his son: "Falling leaves don't moan" (84). In an earlier letter, dated 15 May, 1868, now in Letters Father and Son (CUL), Philip criticizes Edmund's poems in more general terms: "There seems to me an unnaturalness, and unhealthiness, about them, which you would do well to avoid". Yet this criticism, however just, threatened to overwhelm individuality of expression, and the son is unable to maintain his sarcastic attitude. In a letter to Blaikie dated 1st October 1870 Edmund wrote:

'How I wish we were free to print and spread abroad what we please. I have suffered far worse than you have. My 'Garden' [The Tomb in the Garden] . . . has been monstrosly transformed into a treatise on dogmatic Calvinism and would have had that hideous gangrene, the creed of Eternal Punishment, in it had I not in gasping despair strenuously resisted that.

In that effort I was victor but, all strength gone, I  
sank into a marish of dulness, a sort of walking  
swoon, through which I still welter' (Thwaite 84-85).

Madrigals, Songs, and Sonnets was published in 1870 and  
ignored; it only sold twelve copies (Thwaite 85). But it  
became the first in a long line of books which Edmund  
published with increasing success.

Despite the religious freedom the son claimed for  
himself, the literary freedom to think and publish for  
himself is not forthcoming, because the father still insists  
on interfering with the son's soul; Edmund's soul is  
incarnate in his religious poetry, as it expresses the  
spirit of his new inner "fashioning". Philip censors his  
son's poems, thus "oppressing" them with a dogmatic creed  
and denying the author freedom of the press. Thus, the  
father exercises the same textual authority which enslaved  
Edmund in a form of typological bondage. Moreover, just as  
the father "monstrously transformed" pools of stagnant water  
into a baby, so also he is a Frankenstein of poetry,  
grafting on "unnatural" limbs to his son's creation (thus  
turning Philip's criticism of Edmund's poems back upon  
Philip himself). The narrative war between father and son  
continues, with Philip imposing theological propaganda on  
Edmund's poetry, just as he and Emily imposed the story of  
Samuel on his autobiography. In the "Tomb in the Garden"  
battle, the son achieves a Pyrrhic victory, but it is one  
that leaves him dull, almost dead--the same psychological  
condition he experienced immediately after his birth--  
"uttering no cry, I appeared to be dead" (F&S 38). As ever,  
the creative monster is the Father, who continues to haunt

the pages of Edmund's later biographies about poets and who emerges as a powerful literary figure in his own right, threatening the son with his artistic authority.

The narrative of the epilogue--with its final usurpation of the right to fashion the self--demonstrates in microcosm how Edmund tried in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse and Father and Son to reverse the process of being written upon. In these books, the son attempted to incarnate his Father into a poetic and typological identity of his own devising and thus he mirrors the father's crimes of writing against him. Yet the irony is that Edmund ends up creating another monster, a character intended to serve his greater artistic designs but who instead "turns" on him and refuses to relinquish the title of rival "poet" and "liar".

The system of Biblical and typological interpretation which is exemplified in the "Recollections", Abraham and His Children, and A Memorial offered a more "artistic" and powerful method of reading and writing than Edmund acknowledged. His parents were fortunate in that there was no one to look over their shoulder and edit their writing (and living) in the same way that they edited Edmund. What was creative activity for them--reading the Bible, fashioning a typological identity for themselves and their son--became a monstrous imposition on Edmund. Even the opportunity to become a sinning prodigal like Augustine, Bunyan, or Emily<sup>1</sup> is denied him, as they fashioned him into a child saint<sup>2</sup> whose only chance of sinning--through poetry and story-telling--is controlled by the father and forbidden

by the mother. They drew upon the "violence" inherent in typology to strike him with the blow of I Samuel.

In self-defence, Edmund tries to become the anti-prodigal, returning home not to abase himself but to reject the theology of his father and his predestined identity as servant of the Lord. Whether Edmund fulfils the Biblical story to the letter or not, he is nevertheless dependant upon it, just as he must depend on his father to write and publish the very poems which are meant to represent and express his independence from him. Edmund becomes a better prodigal than he knows, returning home to the poetic father who "kills" the son's "fattest" poems and forces him to swallow criticism. Thus the Gospel of Emancipation that Father and Son represents is still overshadowed by the letters and Biblical "poetry" of the Father; the son's attempt to re-write the Book of Edmund and turn it into Madrigals, Songs, and Sonnets is preempted by Philip's creative and editorial authority and ends in humiliation. The final judgement on Father and Son does not bode well for Edmund, in that the one book of his which posterity has deemed independent and creative, nevertheless depends upon the restrictive typological training which "yoked" him tightly in an umbilical relationship with his parents<sup>3</sup>. He is the prodigal who never committed the sin of storytelling as convincingly as the mother and father he tried to sin against. Thus, he is not worthy to be called their sinner.

## II. The Prodigal Sinner in Samuel Butler's "The Way of All Flesh".

Two contemporaries of Gosse help to place Father and Son in context: Samuel Butler and Mark Rutherford. Both men wrote autobiographical novels which explore their movement away from the faith of their fathers, and both use typology for their individual ends. Butler's iconoclastic The Way of All Flesh, was published in 1903, only four years before Father and Son. Yet he started writing it in 1873 and the composition proceeded in fits and starts until it was finally published posthumously. Gosse outlines the literary history of The Way of All Flesh in an essay in Aspects and Impressions (1922)<sup>4</sup> which reviews Henry Festing Jones' Life of Samuel Butler. Gosse explains how Butler's friends encouraged him (much as Moore and Symonds encouraged Gosse):

He took it up again in 1878, and disliked it; it needed Miss Savage's energy to start him again with proper gusto. Mr. Festing Jones was by this time upon the spot. . . . They were the Aaron and Hur who held up the arms of this incorrigible "special pleader," and insisted that he should stick to the truth, and not embroider it. In 1884 The Way of All Flesh was finished; in 1885 it underwent some revision, and after that was not touched again (61-62).

The autobiographer is here a tired prophet, a Moses who needs support in order to fight the battle of the truth. Like Bunyan, Edmund reads the autobiographical project in terms of the typological context of the Exodus narrative.

In the introduction to the Penguin edition of Butler's novel, Richard Hoggart emphasizes the resemblance between

Gosse and Butler's autobiographical writings, arguing that The Way of All Flesh is:

partly an autobiography of a kind found in many literatures--in which a young man rejects his background and finds his own way. Within that large genre it is among the more striking of a British sub-group--one of the first autobiographical attacks on the Victorian and Edwardian family, and a precursor of many such books in several forms, of which Edmund Gosse's Father and Son is perhaps the best known example (7).

Gosse and Ernest Pontifex, the "character" who plays Butler, were both assigned a specific spiritual destiny at an early age: Samuel and Earnest. Moreover, their fathers were both typological practitioners who used the authority of the Bible to define their sons' identities (though in different ways). As a baby, Ernest was baptized in water from the river Jordan and this fact combined with his allegorical name was meant to "have a permanent effect upon the boy's character, and influence him for good" (WAF 106). Pontifex and Gosse are both "dedicated" children.

It is certain that the adult Gosse read Butler's novel, although it is not clear whether it was before or after the publication of his own autobiography. Apart from the 1922 essay about Butler in Aspects and Impressions, earlier evidence can be found in a 1913 letter from George Moore to Gosse, where The Way of All Flesh is discussed. The letter, dated April 28, 1913 asserts:

Never did a man miss his chance as completely as Butler did in [The Way of All Flesh], what a theme rehabilitation by means of a crime, redemption through a crime! (Brotherton Collection, Leeds).

The crime to which Moore refers is the one which Ernest Pontifex committed when he mistook a respectable girl for a

fallen woman and propositioned her accordingly. His subsequent incarceration is what allows him to completely disinherit his family and throw off the burden of his profession as a clergyman. Ernest realized that

He had an opportunity now, if he chose to take it, of escaping once for all from those who had at once tormented him and would hold him earthward should a chance of soaring open before him. He should never have had it but for his imprisonment (WAF 316).

The disgrace of being a convict redeems Ernest because it allows him to "give up father and mother for Christ's sake"; for him, Christ represents "the pursuit of his truest and most lasting happiness" (WAF 318). Grace rewards disgrace, with the chief of sinners receiving blessings unnumbered. The social death which the clergyman-turned-prisoner experiences is what releases him to be born again. Moreover, his fall is a fortunate one, both in spiritual and financial terms, for not too long after Ernest's release from prison, he inherits an enormous bequest from his aunt. The more Ernest is "convicted" with sin, the more grace he receives, a paradox which Augustine meditates upon in Book VIII of his Confessions:

O God, who are so good, what is it that makes men rejoice more for the salvation of a soul for which all had despaired, or one that is delivered from great danger, than for one which hope has never been lost. . . . You too, merciful Father, rejoice more over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine souls that are justified and have no need of repentance (161).

Augustine quotes Jesus' words in Luke 15:7, where He responds to the Pharisees and scribes' criticism about fraternizing with sinners. The parable of the prodigal son follows soon afterwards, commencing in verse eleven, and it



illustrates the meaning of verse seven--i.e. that the penitent sinner deserves more divine attention than his brothers who stayed at home and behaved themselves.

The Way of All Flesh draws upon the story of the prodigal son, but in Butler's hands, typology becomes a vehicle of irony and satire--Ernest refusing to employ typology in earnest. The protagonist of The Way of All Flesh was still estranged from his parents when he inherited his aunt's money (over their heads, for they received nothing) and he decided not to tell them. Ernest said to his godfather, Overton, who acts as narrator: "No, no, no . . . it would be like Isaac offering up Abraham and no thicket with a ram in it near at hand. Besides, why should I? We have cut each other these four years" (WAF 387). Ernest appropriates for himself the role of the patriarch, just as Edmund became the "father" in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse. Typology is turned upside down, as Isaac sacrifices Abraham, victim becomes murderer, and son becomes father. Edmund often chose to identify with "unsanctioned" and unsanctified types in the Bible, and Ernest takes similar liberties, re-writing the story of Abraham and Isaac to suit his rebellious purposes.

Despite the intention to spare him, Abraham is nevertheless destined to be sacrificed at the altar of Isaac's fortune, as the facts of Ernest's inheritance are forced to the surface when he returns home to see his mother before she dies. The return of the prodigal is also re-written, with Ernest surprising his family by appearing in expensive clothes and "looking robust and full of health and

vigour" (WAF 390). Compare his situation with the less fortunate son in the Luke narrative, who spent all the money his father gave him:

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him (Luke 15:14-16).

Ernest, in contrast to the Biblical prodigal, is well-fed and well-dressed, by no means in need of resorting to pig slops for food. Far from being pleased about his son's success, Theobald Pontifex was offended by Ernest's deviation from the script of Luke 15:

This was not what he had bargained for. He wanted Ernest to return, but he was to return as any respectable, well-regulated prodigal ought to return --abject, broken-hearted, asking for forgiveness from the tenderest and most long-suffering father in the whole world. If he should have shoes and stockings and whole clothes at all, it should be only because absolute rags and tatters had been graciously dispensed with, whereas here he was swaggering in a grey ulster and a blue and white neck-tie, and looking better than Theobald had ever seen him in his life. It was unprincipled (WAF 390).

Ernest changes the definition of the prodigal by refusing to accept the Biblical standards of prodigality. He turns the tables on his father in the same way he did with the Abraham/Isaac reversal. For in the Way of All Flesh version, it is the father who is abject and the son is the powerful dispenser of forgiveness. Ernest exposes the patriarchal bias of the prodigal story, in that forgiveness comes at the price of self-abasement on the son's part. Ernest does what Edmund tried to do in The Life of Philip Henry Gosse and Father and Son--triumph over the father by

stealing the typological ground out from under his feet. However, Ernest seems to be more successful in his usurpation and "patricide". When Theobald questions the legitimacy of his inheritance, Ernest

turned sharply on Theobald in a moment. I will not repeat the words he used, for they came out before he had time to consider them, and they might strike some of my readers as disrespectful; there were not many of them, but they were effectual. Theobald said nothing, but turned almost of an ashen colour (WAF 391)<sup>5</sup>.

Here, the prodigal is a dangerous figure, returning home only to make a burnt offering of the father.

Ernest and Edmund struggle against their fathers by using the methods those same fathers taught them. Typology is employed ironically in order to undermine the "earnest" use of it to which Philip Gosse and Theobald Pontifex ascribed. The elder Gosse was a committed typologist and Theobald constructed a "Harmony of the Old and New Testaments", a process whereby he "cuts little bits out of the Bible and gums them with exquisite neatness by the side of other little bits" (WAF 97). The project of undermining the typological premises of the Fathers includes re-writing the stories from whence the types are discovered and put into practice tropologically. Thus Samuel becomes a poetic priest, Abraham becomes the sacrificial lamb, and the prodigal returns home in triumph to reject and sacrifice the father.

Ernest and Edmund are the prodigals who refuse to follow the original Biblical script, and in this sense they use the sin of storytelling in order to provoke creative grace. They cast themselves into the role of prodigal sinner in

order to redeem themselves through crimes of writing. They "lie" about the traditional stories in order to redeem themselves from the determining power of these same stories--claiming for themselves the freedom to create a new prodigal or Isaac (and thus a new kind of Son). Philip called Edmund "my beloved Son" (251) in his "epigraph" to Father and Son, thus forcing him to play Christ to his God. But the proposed Son found this "Christian" role to represent a form of bondage. The freedom that he and Ernest claim is the freedom to fashion their own typological identity--adopting the interpretive license of typology and robbing the father of the "literary" authority to fashion and mould the son.

### III. "The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford" and "Mark Rutherford's Deliverance": The Religion of Nature and Tropology of Christ.

William Hale White is the author of The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) and Mark Rutherford's Deliverance (1885), although he is better known under the name of Mark Rutherford, the protagonist of his autobiographical novels. Rutherford's use of typology is less ironic than Gosse or Butler's, but it is nevertheless adapted to literary purposes. He resembles Emily Gosse in his passion for imitating Christ, yet imitation turns to creation when Rutherford constructs a Romantic Christ that is fashioned in his own image. In certain respects, Rutherford's autobiographies most resemble the conversion narratives of

the seventeenth-century (and Emily Gosse's "Recollections"), something which is in keeping with his roots in the Bedford community<sup>6</sup>. Yet his conversion to Romanticism is a dramatic "literary" conversion which foreshadows Gosse's experience with Virgil and his subsequent blending of the poetic with the typological.

Rutherford shared with his fellow "dedicatees" the distinction of being the "child of pious parents" (AMR 13). This being the case, as with Gosse, Mark was early initiated into adult membership of the local Independents chapel without having to provide evidence of "that convulsion which those, not favoured like myself, necessarily underwent when they were called" (AMR 13-14). Gosse, Butler and Rutherford were all earmarked for the Lord's service. Rutherford says simply: "It was necessary that an occupation should be found for me, and after much deliberation it was settled that I should "go into the ministry"" (AMR 15).

Rutherford's loss of faith in Calvinism was less obviously theatrical than Gosse's. It did not serve as a means of rebellion against his father, as it did in Gosse and Butler's case. Instead, his "fall" from faith is a gradual decay, marked by depression and a conviction of his utter worthlessness and "nothingness". Rutherford lacks the hubris of a Butler or Gosse; he did not try to reverse typologically-defined hierarchies or usurp the power of the father. It could be said that he is the true Calvinist of the lot--resigned to a predestined state of depression. Yet he is not a "straight" Puritan, like Bunyan or Philip Gosse. Rutherford's deconversion from Calvinism is concomitant with

his conversion to a Wordsworthian "religion", thus prefiguring Gosse's conversion to poetry. Of the three authors, Rutherford's autobiographies are the least literary in style, but he nevertheless shares, with Gosse particularly, a tendency to re-write the Bible in literary terms.

Rutherford's inner transformation and "fall" into poetry occurs while he is studying at theological college and being subjected the (perceived) sterile doctrines of Calvinism. He describes his first two years there as being "entirely external":

My heart was altogether untouched by anything I heard, read, or did. . . . But one day in my third year, a day I remember as well as Paul must have remembered afterwards the day on which he went to Damascus, I happened to find amongst a parcel of books a volume of poems in paper boards. It was called "Lyrical Ballads," and I read first one and then the whole book. It conveyed to me no new doctrine, and yet the change it wrought in me could only be compared with that which is said to have been wrought on Paul himself by the Divine apparition (AMR 23).

Wordsworth's book of poems served as catalyst to a powerful revolution in Rutherford's soul, and it "excited a movement and a growth which went on till, by degrees, all the systems which enveloped me like a body gradually decayed from me and fell away into nothing" (AMR 23).

The nothingness that Wordsworth's Bible of Nature encourages is a saving nothingness. Rutherford compares himself to Paul in a spirit of high seriousness, but he also recognizes that for him, Wordsworth rewrote Genesis and the Gospels (AMR 25). Instead of parodying typology, he successfully assimilates it into a Romantic vision of

Christianity: "I sought refuge in the idea of GOD, the God of a starry night with its incomprehensible distances; and I was at peace" (MRD 60). Nature, and the saving love of Woman, is what reveals the means of Mark Rutherford's Deliverance. But this revelation can only be conceived within the typological framework of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Poetry receives the status of the "Divine apparition". And Rutherford reifies Nature into religion by performing an intellectual manoeuvre that resembles that of Feuerbach; Mark believes that "Christianity in strange historical fashion is an expression of nature, a projection of her into a biography and a creed" (MRD 114)

Rutherford's use of tropology is also transformed by Romanticism. Personal imitation of Christ is what helps to fill the vacuum that is created when belief in a metaphysical Christ diminishes--tropology facilitating the process of secularization of the scriptures. Rutherford asserts that Jesus must be internalized and impersonated before his presence is felt:

He is not of much use to me unless I say to myself, how is it with thee? unless I myself become what He was. This was the meaning of Jesus to the Apostle Paul. . . . Jesus lived in him like a second soul, taking the place of his own soul and directing him accordingly (MRD 35).

Although Rutherford follows the scripturally-prescribed example of Paul, he nevertheless engages in the art of fiction when he creates a Christ and engulfs Him tropologically. In doing so, he effectively re-writes Christianity in Romantic terms, just as Gosse re-wrote typological stories in order to prevent them from writing on

him. The Christ of the Rutherford autobiographies is an existential hero and misunderstood romantic--a rebel who challenges the Jewish and Roman establishment. He is also the archetypal loner and "poor solitary thinker" (AMR 44). Rutherford worships the solitary Poet and Prophet, turning Romanticism into a cult of the Romantic Christ. Mark is "struck with the absolute loneliness of Jesus, and with His horror of that death upon the cross" (AMR 60), and he sees Christianity as the religion of the poor, oppressed, and lonely.

Rutherford's religion, like Philip and Emily Gosse's, is highly individualistic. Jesus "tells us that each man should learn to find peace in his own thoughts, his own visions. It is . . . most difficult to believe that my highest happiness consists in my perception of whatever is beautiful" (AMR 45). Rutherford marries aestheticism with religion and offers a quietistic, meditative version of Christianity that appeals to the independent thinker. Here, the protagonist of White's autobiographical novels embodies the ideals of the Plymouth Brethren (although it must be said that in practice these ideals were soon discarded and exchanged for sectarianism and the very brand of Calvinism that Rutherford rejected).

In Rutherford's hands, Jesus becomes a misunderstood artist and thus he resembles Gosse's vision of himself and to a certain degree, his father: "He was young and full of enthusiastic hope, but when He died He had found hardly anything but misunderstanding. He had written nothing" (AMR 60). The lonely and misunderstood man on the cross is also



a type of Rutherford; the Christ he creates is another version of himself. And Rutherford as suffering, lonely Christ exemplifies the tropological practice of imitation turning into replacement. He and Gosse emerge as Romantic Christs--re-defining Christianity for poetry's sake--whereas Butler is a ironic Christ, giving up his parents for his own sake.

Rutherford tries to conceal his Messianic ambitions with the words: "Nobody would be bold enough to cry, That too is my case, and yet the poorest and humblest soul has a right to the consolation that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (AMR 116). With a measure of sympathetic magic, Rutherford creates an image of Christ that exactly suits his own emotional and moral needs. Far from not being "bold enough" to identify with Christ, he goes so far as to become Christ Himself.

If Philip and Emily Gosse tried to project their son's name into the scriptures and enforce his imitation of Samuel and Christ, Rutherford tries to achieve this for himself, on his own terms. He writes himself back into the scriptures, whereas Edmund tries to write himself out of the typological tradition through re-writing the scriptures themselves. Yet both employ typology and tropology in a "secular" way--turning the Puritan tradition against itself by writing deconversion narratives in the secularized form of "literary" conversion narratives; these literary autobiographies confess the authors' devotion to sacred texts of poetry. Religious language, Biblical quotations,

and tropological practices do not serve to disguise their art, but to enhance it.

The Art of Lying for Gosse, Butler, and Rutherford is the art of creating fictional versions of the typological stories which "bound" them in their childhood. Gosse in particular commits the sin of storytelling in order to liberate himself from the dedication story which was imposed on him. Yet to do so he must rely on "creative" parental readings of the Bible which he finds difficult to surpass; he depends upon his typological education in order to turn the tables on his parents and define them according to his own literary and typological designs (imitating the coercive power of typology). Yet even as a poet, Edmund must depend upon the artistic authority of the father, and thus the rebellious son of Father and Son is turned into a disappointing prodigal who does not sin as "artistically" as the Wildean liar. In his father's eyes, Edmund is a disappointment because he rejected the Samuel type, but posterity has also found him to be an unsatisfactory poet. As the authentic typological "sinners" of the Gosse family, Philip and Emily receive, ironically, the "literary" grace Edmund craves, and thus the hapless prodigal discovers that his biographical and storytelling sins are only successful in so far as they imitate those of the Father and Mother he sinned against.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Donne is also a good and sinful prodigal in Gosse's The Life and Letters of John Donne (1899).

<sup>2</sup> In his article "Edmund Gosse's Father and Son: Between Form and Flexibility", Roger Porter observes that: "From an early age Edmund was pledged to become a child-saint . . . " (178).

<sup>3</sup> Roger Porter further describes how "Edmund is tied to the umbilical cord of his father's preconceptions" (178).

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Gosse's Aspects and Impressions is a collection of essays reprinted mainly from Gosse's articles in The Edinburgh Review, The London Mercury, The Modern Language Review, and The Fortnightly Review.

<sup>5</sup> Butler tries to side-step the issue of filial disrespect by keeping the actual words secret, but Edmund allows the reader to see more of their general character in the Epilogue to Father and Son: "I begged to be let alone, [and] I demanded the right to think for myself . . ." (249). And, as noted in chapter six, charges of impropriety of the kind Overton fears were directed against Edmund's autobiography in some of the reviews that followed its publication.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Gosse is also a child of the Bunyan literary tradition and he alludes to The Pilgrim's Progress in the Epilogue to Father and Son: "As time went on, and I grew older and more independent in mind, my Father's anxiety about what he called 'the pitfalls and snares which surround on every hand the thoughtless giddy youth of London' became extremely painful to himself. By harping in private upon these 'pitfalls'--which brought to my imagination a funny rough woodcut in an old edition of Bunyan, where a devil was seen capering over a sort of box let neatly into the ground--he worked himself up into a frame of mind which was not a little irritating to his hapless correspondent" (242).

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